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PEGGY EATON

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PEGGY O'NEALE EATON
IN HER MIDDLE YEARS

Democracy's Mistress

BY
QUEENA POLLACK



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To a Diplomat,
diplomatically.

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“ . . . that base man calhoun . . . is secretly saying that *mrs. Eaton is the President* . . . a time will come, but that is not yet, when these things will, as a part of the history of the times, be placed before the nation.”

—ANDREW JACKSON, 1829 and 1831.

“For disorder does not come from heaven,
But is brought about by women.”

—CHINESE BOOK OF ODES.

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BOOK I: LAUNCHED

PEGGY EATON

BOOK I

LAUNCHED

I.

SHE never knew the exact day of her birth but she was "just two weeks old" when her mother "sat up in bed" to queue her "father's hair for his attendance at Washington's funeral."

Ere arrival, her name was ready for her; for no proud Ulster O'Neale would dare provoke the fates against a first-born lass by calling her aught but traditional Margaret. When her jocose father noted her quick breath and sparkling blue eyes, he at once nicknamed her Peggy. He was right; for the shorter, lilting version was more appropriate for the impetuous girl, the audacious woman and the astounding widow who personalized American political history.

Before she learned to smile, her home, one of the few brick buildings in new Washington City, was draped in black, and her father, a roguish and impudent Irishman named William O'Neale, became a shade less waggish and irreverent. For George Washington, the great General, who often used to drop into the house on his way over from Mt. Vernon to prod his chosen Capital's growth, and like as not would take a nip with O'Neale now and then, was suddenly stricken with a fatal cold and stilled.

Glory be, but 'twould be a grand funeral. Members of the Masonic Order, Federal Lodge, Number 1, would bedeck themselves in best black square-skirted coat, dark breeches, white silk stockings, and starched stock, for they were to participate officially in his last ceremony. The procession would find them third in line directly behind the last of the family, and they were to perform their Masonic rites, together with Brooke Lodge, Number 47, and

Alexandria Lodge, Number 22, of which the honored hero had been Master.

An historic event was imminent: the country's liberator, "the friend of all," was to be buried. Yet because stages were slow, newspapers weekly, and couriers but able to cover ground at a snail's pace in the sprawling thirteen states, most of the four million citizens would never know of it until all was over. The President and Congress were in Philadelphia, and would not even hear of his demise until the actual day of the obsequies. Present officialdom could not personally honor that which had become so recently past. He'd caught cold on Friday, died Saturday near midnight, and was to be buried on Wednesday at noon. Participants, in a sense, were privileged characters, performing solemn rites for the citizen-body which would have given much to be on hand.

Right lucky it was that William O'Neale, brother-Mason to the General, and a Major in his army, was there on the spot. He was to make his appearance not only as a private citizen but in a semi-official capacity. Following behind the bier of the premier Chief Executive of a new republic, he was to be one of a body of chief mourners, and at the tomb make mystic ritual. Ah, but he'd be telling Peggy about it when she grew up and she'd be telling it to her children and grandchildren in turn.

Out came his black suit and white powder for his hair. The latter wasn't compulsory but it did complete the costume. Properly queued and somewhat subdued, he left the house at eleven. On the pick of his steeds, which had gleaming coat and glistening tail, his figure was self-important, his manner slightly swaggering. Galloping toward the group of Masons who posted hurriedly up the dirt road named Pennsylvania Avenue, he was on his way to a "sublime spectacle."

When he arrived at Mt. Vernon at one, the crowd gathered for the interment was immense. On the portico facing the river lay the remains of the man who had begged Tobias Lear, his secretary, not to bury him before he was three days cold. The funeral was

military but, now that the commanding-general was gone, the soldiers came late. So, in the pale December sunlight, his body lay two hours in wait for his last line of march. At three, as eleven pieces of artillery fired minute guns, he was carried to the grave.

With his Masonic brethren, O'Neale walked between the lines of infantry that flanked the Potomac near the family vault, and as the dying day yielded to a far horizon, there was final farewell before entombment in eternity. In that long twilight which made the General an immortal, "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen," while William O'Neale rode back to his wife, Rhoda, and the new life stirring at her side, snow still lay in patches over the long stretches of grass, and the incomplete dome of the Capitol in the distance seemed like a sepulchre. The cold grew as the darkness spread, consigning the soldier-statesman to an involuntary immobility, while far and near in the world were moving mortals who were to shape Peggy's future.

While earth closed over the coffin of the first American President, the threads of Peggy O'Neale's strange destiny, that of the first American woman to cause the fall of a Cabinet and the choice of a President, were being firmly interwoven in Europe.

Napoleon, with unparalleled audacity, was executing the feat which made him First Consul. Its consequences caused an Italian lad to emigrate to America, and there refuse a Consulship to Naples from the hand of Abraham Lincoln, given only because he was Peggy's last partner in love and life.

Enterprising Nathan Rothschild, without knowledge of a word of English, was in Manchester successfully laying the foundations of a House of international banking and diplomacy that was to outlast dynasties and aid revolutions. His brother Saloman, who had recently married in his twenty-fifth year, was founding a home of his own in Frankfort for his progeny who were to mingle with Peggy O'Neale's.

Goya in Madrid was painting for posterity that "clodhopper yokel, Charles IV," with the Spanish Queen, "like a vulture, with

her brood under her wing," and the remnants of this royal family, after Napoleon dictated abdication, were later in court to praise Peggy's children as prettier than their own.

In Prussia, riding with a new wife to Courts and Electors, was John Quincy Adams, Ambassador to Berlin, who, after he was abandoned in the Presidency, named Peggy, with the Puritanical conception that we are born in sin, an abandoned woman.

Cis-Atlantic, where each citizen was sovereign, spun homelier woof.

Judge Andrew Jackson was riding from court to court in Tennessee, settling disputes between more common electors, without thought that he was to inherit that title of Father of His Country, as well as General George's pistols. With invincible belief, he was to swear that, as the Aspasia of his Administration, Peggy was as pure as in her pristine infancy.

A young lawyer in Kentucky, Henry Clay, was to believe the adverse and tell it to anyone who would listen.

John Henry Eaton, a preparatory student to the University of North Carolina, was the one man in the world who was to know the truth, and never tell it.

North and South there were two other young men preparing for the law which was to make them respectively Peggy's firmest friend in need, and deadliest foe in deed, though both were to use her equally for political purpose—the former to paint her reputation too white, the latter, too black: seventeen year old Martin Van Buren read court cases under candlelight at his father's inn at Kinderhook before summoning courage to begin his Odyssey to New York, and John C. Calhoun, an orphan of eighteen in South Carolina, consulted with his mother on his decision to attend Dr. Waddell's eccentric log-cabin school in Georgia before entering Yale.

Already in the limelight, though serving his initial term in the Senate, was that singular genius, John Randolph, intellectual, irascible and impotent, on whose clannish family tree Peggy's daughter

took her place; while on his home ground in Virginia romped a beautiful blond boy, awakening in his adolescence to the realization that soon he would be a man and must continue the fighting traditions of the Timberlake clan. His first conquest was Peggy, and in her he was to awaken first love.

2.

Her birthright was the *bon mot*. She was born with a ready tongue and a brilliant beauty which time could scarcely corrupt and trouble never fully destroy. Both were to bring her triumphs and tragedy.

When seventy-five, she piquantly phrased her way out of amorphous infancy with the plait of her father's powdered hair. It was the essence of her character to identify her beginnings with a great event: for years she bragged that Washington was "often a guest at father's house"; and she privately inclined to the belief that no man was really great unless he met her. Familiarity with Presidents and diplomats was her life-breath and made residence in the Capital indispensable.

She preceded the second President in gazing upon the White House, and was wheeled about the Capitol before ever Congress convened there. As a consequence, she always considered herself more thoroughly native than those who, despite position, came later for official reasons. When, subsequently, she was called "The American Pompadour," and the unofficial First Lady of the Land, she bore an aristocratic arrogance toward her critics. Pompadour? Then she was the Parisienne; they, the provincials. She was born and bred to the political center; they were brought to it only by accident of election. In this attitude, as in most, she was her father's daughter.

Only a few days after she drew her first breath, William O'Neale added to the world's gaiety in a playful advertisement which proves him as adroit as he was amusing. Offering the public a variety of goods, including coal, food, board and lodgings, he advertised

in the only local newspaper that he had stoves "of a Superior Quality to any imported (not of the same kind)," together with certain improvements "Said to Exceed any yet Invented."

The winter was hard, beset with blizzards. The atmosphere was crisp; business brisk. Constant calls were made upon O'Neale's coalyard behind the house, and a pretty penny gathered from the sale of stoves to heat shivering settlers in scattered shacks.

His house on I Street, between 20th and 21st, midway between the Capitol and Georgetown, the residential section across the river, was a commodious building of red brick, and a real home by virtue of his wife's graces. Next year, when the lawmakers came, they'd probably like to take residence with such a family. He'd better stress that in his advertisements hereafter. Now that there was an addition to the family, he must expand the income. He resolved to open an Inn, concentrating his efforts for the next year to that end. By the time Peggy would be grown, 'twould be the best hotel in the city, for a city he was sure the straggling village would be one day, with magnificent avenues and parks, just as on *L'Enfant's* map. Both William O'Neale and Peggy had ambition and were to grow with Washington to national importance. His hotel was to win him fame and fortune, as well as set the stage for his dramatic daughter's destiny. Imprudently, he gave his "pretty Peg" a childhood in a public house, even in infancy depriving her of the informality of family life. Before she could speak, the *beau monde* was her home, her world.

Peggy was a lively sprite, displaying, in very early childhood, a strong will. Before she could talk, the permanent seat of government was removed to Washington, a "wilderness city" with but few semi-completed public buildings. When President Adams came down from Philadelphia, he was none too pleased at the place his predecessor had chosen, and his wife soon followed suit with complaints of the barn-like qualities of the White House. Wood and coal were at a premium, she wrote her daughter, her "looking

glasses but dwarfs for this house," which she proceeded to immortalize by spreading wash to dry in the celebrated East Room.

But the Presidential household was well off in comparison with members of Congress, for Oliver Wolcott, Secretary of the Treasury, wondered how they could possibly find lodgings, "unless they will consent to live like scholars in a college or monks in a monastery, crowded ten or twenty in one house, and utterly excluded from society."

Most men came without their wives but there was no need to live like monks. A few boarding houses sprang up to nurture their sense of home. Most popular among them was O'Neale's, where warmth, both in spirit and substance, abounded. Not only was the owner's auxiliary heating business a guarantee of good comfort throughout the winter months when Congress convened, but the host was jolly, the fare was plain and plentiful. And what doubly attracted many home-loving Southerners to his house was the buoyant family spirit, the beautiful but pious Mrs. O'Neale, and the lovely child toddling underfoot. Most accommodations afforded Congressmen but single beds, two in a room, and only the Speaker of the House, in honor of his position, was allotted an individual chamber.

When, perforce, lawmakers found it imperative to escape each other's presence, at O'Neale's at least they had the refuge of a cozy parlor, a genial host, a pretty, well-bred woman and a charming child. That the family group attracted many fastidious Congressmen is attested in the fact that O'Neale, within a few seasons, profited sufficiently to build an annex to his house. Soon he was advertising "genteel boarding for twenty gentlemen in separate rooms. Stabling if required. A coachee will be furnished free of any expense to members, to Capitol and back again."

Lawmakers who could afford a private room flocked to his house. Too, the conveyance to the Capitol, furnished gratuitously by the generous owner, caught their fancy. In short, it became the *bon ton* habitation for exclusive Congressmen where "a waiter to

one or more gentleman" was furnished. Southern gentry, especially, accustomed to such service and servility, liked this special mark of distinction, instead of group "messes" patronized by Northerners. Considering themselves connoisseurs of charm in women, whom they judged by value to the salon, they admired the beautiful Mrs. O'Neale, admitting a vast respect, too, for her piety and amiability. She evidently came from higher station than her happy-go-lucky husband.

Peggy's mother was a fine-fibred woman, dignified, delicate and with a distinctive bearing which her eldest child was to carry into loftier social circles. In education, she was signally superior to her husband, but not in initiative. A friend of the family describes her as of a "larger mould" than her mate, who was coarser-grained. But it was precisely because he was less finicky and more familiar with the world at his door that he became one of the best hotel-keepers of the period. What won him widespread patronage was a gregarious nature which enabled him to mingle with his guests, slave-holding Federalists from the South, without compromising his own more Republican allegiance.

Mr. O'Neale, before leaving New Jersey, his home-state, according to his own admission, "used to be the most populous man in that country and had still many connexions, much acquaintance and considerable influence." His daughter, who was often bundled into the coach and four which went daily from their house to Congress, might similarly have boasted that she was the most popular baby in the District of Columbia. Instead of one fond father to fondle her, she had twenty male admirers dancing attendance on her laughing whims.

Inevitably, Peggy was spoiled. For her an ordinary father's devotion was multiplied twenty-fold. Congressmen deprived of their own children's companionship took O'Neale's pretty little daughter into their affections. She had twenty protectors to carry her across the slushy dirt roads that surrounded the hotel or to rescue her from

the onslaught of a cow—a never-forgotten event that established a life-long repugnance to the bovine world. There were twenty men to bounce her on their knees when she was good, or curl her in arms, or stroke her heavy brown hair to contentment when she was naughty. And she was often disobedient, wanting her own way. Her high-spirited playfulness was matched by a terrible temper. When she went into tantrums, Mrs. O'Neale, the only one who could handle her, was handicapped as disciplinarian. For when Peggy had subsided, Congressmen outside the family circle found it hard to resist impish blue eyes and importunate demands for attention.

Naturally, she grew every day not only more pretty but more pert. Too early she was instinctively aware that she could not only command men's admiration by variable expressions, but control it also. For one duty to her devout mother, whom she secretly admired, she received nothing but the satisfaction of a deed well-done. But for a slight service, a swift kiss, or a graceful curtsy to the semi-strangers in the other rooms of their house, she had recompense in grateful devotion. Too early, little Miss O'Neale mastered the art of pleasing deliberately, with an end in view; too soon she had too many men eating out of her hand.

But the men could not be entirely blamed either, for the child was indisputably charming. A born coquette with the added virtue of innocence, set in extreme youth among too many of the opposite sex unwittingly to teach her her powers, Peggy was a perplexing problem. While Rhoda O'Neale was busy in child-birth and the physical rearing of Mary, Georgianna and John, Peggy's successors, the eldest child was thrown in company with her father. The disproportionate propinquity intensified, at an early age, traits inherited from him. Only later, Peggy showed signs of her mother's marvellous energy, powers of endurance, dignity and real resilience.

Versatile William O'Neale had by now become an expansive boniface. He had great gusto, an irrepressible animation and an irresistible audacity. To Peggy, he was a boon companion. In him, her childhood was most deeply bound up. Her youthful laughter

found its true spring in his buoyancy, her temper and temperament their well in his volatile nature. Perhaps because he had only half as long to live as his wife, and would never know the height of his first-born's fortune, or failure, she was Papa's Peg; what the relationship was to lose in longevity it garnered in fullness.

Before she was ready for school, they were inseparable. He often took her down to the Capitol where he went daily to listen to debates. Mr. O'Neale had political ambitions. He thought he might like to become Governor of the District, but one day when he mentioned it to James Monroe, his next-door neighbor, he was dissuaded by the Secretary of State's comment that such an office could hardly be created *ad valorem*. Nevertheless, aside from his aspirations, he had sound political opinions, which went with the more liberal trend of the times. In religion, similarly, he was inclined to be non-conformist. One of his guests noted in his diary that he "took Supper with Mr. O'Neale and family. An old lady or two his relations from New Jersey . . . seemingly Methodist, attacked O'Neale on his falling off—for Mr. O'Neale was once an earnest apparently sincere professor of religion and still regards it but does not, I suppose, think himself religious and has contracted some singular notions about the Scriptures and Christianity. He approves the New Testament but disbelieves many facts stated in the old."

No wonder Peggy found her father a source of unending marvels. He had her own vitality and vivacity. Her mother told her mystic fairy stories about another world, but Dad engaged her with real ones. She listened with an interest authentic to her realistic nature when, in Irish-folk-tale fashion, he gave grandiloquent descriptions of how they lived in the court-city of the country, what the Capital was to the Union, and what it would be when it developed. Though she was too young to grasp "the merits and demerits of the Embargo," as her short legs dangled from a seat in the Senate gallery, she did take hold of the idea that her home place

was the pivot of political officialdom, that at the Capitol daily she had the advantage of being in the center of law's creation. It gave her a pride in residence that never deserted her.

She would never leave Washington, that was certain. What else was there to seek elsewhere? Here were the most important men; here were made the important measures. She would grow up and marry one of the men who made the law. That she took for granted.

Her father fed both her vanity and ambition. She was pretty enough to do that, but she must learn, besides, everything a real lady should know. She must be able to dance and sing, play the piano, recite a pretty poem, carry on a conversation with anyone from the President down, and do many other things that would make others think her not only agreeable to entertain and to be entertained by, but actually accomplished. With this he gave the child her ultimate curricula. Did she think herself capable of working hard to acquire these accomplishments?

Tilting her head with haughty air, the future grand-dame danced a curtsy to her father for the implied compliment. Well she knew that she carried his own graces into girlhood. She'd learn, all right. Then if she could, he intimated, she was a little girl with a big future. Just as Pompadour when a child was taught the arts with a view to conserving them for the King's pleasure, Peg had instilled into her by an over-fond father attention to the importance of elegance of manners and excellence of mind by developing natural talents.

Peggy, his pride, was a fascinating personality already, winsome and acute. She was light-hearted, but he'd see to it that she didn't emerge from girlhood merely light-headed. If she were a gay lass, she'd not become a mere giggling one. He used the right method with his wilful Peg. He didn't order her, but encouraged, seemingly indulgent of her wishes. Outwardly, she took advantage of it, high-handedly, but inwardly, she adored him and tried to reach the beau ideal he set her. At the hotel, which was growing

rapidly to prominence and popularity, imposing Congressmen were the humble subjects, and tiny, tousled-haired Peggy O'Neale the obdurate, ruling Queen.

She was growing quickly, Washington City slowly. The country's most cultured men were sentenced to exist for the better part of each year in a comparatively uncivilized little country-village, devoid, save for Congressional meetings, of communal refinements or complex social life. So they concentrated on their selected homes for intense companionship. Though they had faith in the chosen Capital as a "future residence," for the present they were only partially satisfied. More objective eyes were scathing. Tom Moore, the English poet, has neither been forgotten nor forgiven by patriotic Americans for his

"This embryo Capital where Fancy sees
Squares in Morasses, obelisks in trees;
Which second-sighted seers, ev'n now adorn
With shrines unbuilt and heroes yet unborn."

A gentleman who knelt at a universal shrine undoubtedly thought his heroine yet unborn, when, in an attempt to admonish the critics of the current government, he humbly proposed "if it were but for the sake of variety, that a female administration should for once take its turn, and be allowed a fair and candid trial on the slippery pinnacle of fame." Of course, he anonymously amended after lauding England's matriarchal reigns, "I do not mean that this my offered scheme shall take immediate effect. . . . But from the natural fickleness of our tempers, and the instability of human affairs, a change must happen some time or other." He didn't dream that the lady who was to change the current of political tides, give his country a lively female administration by way of variety, was the lovely little girl who drove down to Congress with her Dad, and aimed to perfect herself to please anyone—from a President down.

Men resented women's intrusion in politics, and seldom spoke, aside from personalities (ladies' fare), of laws or lawmaking before them. Woe to the few women of fashion, who, in an attempt to idle away an afternoon, stole into Congress! Even Randolph, the enlightened, truly educated gentleman who petrified dullards when he arose to castigate proposals, focused a bony finger toward the gallery when he heard the swish of petticoats and made shrill demand to know why those women weren't at home knitting instead?

Yet at home, each sunset at dinner, Peggy's mind knit into a knowledge of practical politics. One evening there was a discussion by Governor Milledge, General Trigg, General Blount, and Colonel Alston, all Representatives who lived at O'Neale's. General Sumter, a fellow-boarder noted, was a man of "genteel, military manners, making now and then a very sensible remark." Governor Milledge was "more plain in dress and rude in manners. . . if a poor man and low station he might be thought ill-mannerly . . . there being a pretty large piece of quince on the plate of preserves and some sauce, he hauled the saucer near, took the quince in his thumb and finger and gormandized the whole at a bite." General Trigg was "more foppish in dress than any of them . . . talks some but less than Milledge, and not in so earnest, forward, dictatorial a manner." General Blount was "pretty sensible and perspicuous . . . but was probably a violent partisan and strong in his prejudices." Col. Alston, the last member of the group, was "full of polite airs and polite talk; not a great man but a pretty man."

At the same time that Peggy was listening avidly to spirited political discussion at her father's tavern, unconsciously preparing herself for participation in the official life about her. *The Female Friend*, an annual published under the patronage of Washington's environs, wrote that "a female politician is only less disgusting than a female infidel." The ladies agreed with Randolph that their place was in the home. In a country theoretically free in religion and rulers, whose most intelligent women were proud of their

ignorance of political ideas, pretty Peg was to suffer a very hard fate.

She was educated much beyond her station, that of an Inn-keeper's daughter. Her learning, though, was only equal to that of many girls' of the higher classes. Society in Washington was becoming restricted. The same party in power for some fifteen years, there were unmistakable signs of the caste system's snobbery. Private schools for the children of such lawmakers as dared to bring their families to the uncomfortable Capital, maintained class distinctions. To one of these, Peggy was sent, though her father had not yet attained the coveted Governorship, perhaps only because rigid Republicans, who believed that only the ruling classes should rule, were amazed at his effrontery and discouraged his ambition. Perhaps, unconsciously, he transferred his aspiration to Peg, for he spared no expense for her education, in the event that if she ever came to the foreground, persons could not laugh at her boldness in striving for a specific place in society.

To the best school in the city she went, where Mrs. Hayward was headmistress. The course of study embraced "orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, bookkeeping, English grammar, composition, belles lettres, history, chronology, geography, the use of Globes and maps, topography, drawing and painting." And to complete the catholicism of the choice, twenty-five different species of needle-work were taught, "viz: plain, embossed and open, cotton-works, netting and tetting, landscape, flower and fancy, crewel works, embroidery in gold, silver, silk and worsted, tombour, artificial flowers, filagree, mosaick, bead-basket, chimney ornaments, table mats, and hearth rugs, with other useful and ornamental accomplishments."

For scholars who encompassed all these with dexterity, the "French language, music and dancing" were also advantageously instructive to young ladies whose hopes for husbands resided in ability to outshine rivals.

Music and dancing were Peg's favorite studies. She so soon exhausted the repertoire of the teacher in terpsichore that her father allowed her to have additional lessons with the expert foreign dancing-master, Mr. Generes. Whether the schoolmistress marked Peg as excelling in either useful or ornamental accomplishments is not recorded, but a President's wife stands witness that she did superlatively well in music and dancing.

It was at the famous Union Tavern, the social center of the growing city, on March 16, 1812, that Mr. Generes, who taught children "the polite art of dancing in all its branches and in the most fashionable style," gave his final students' ball for the season. Dolly Madison the President's wife who had brought such delightfully feminine frivolity and warmth into the White House, after Abigail Adams' rather arid aristocracy, was the judge. Peggy drove out with her parents, and was in high feather. Mr. Generes had never actually told her in plain words that she was his best pupil, but didn't he single her out to demonstrate steps for stragglers? She was expectant, and eager to show her skill in open competition. It was not so much overboldness as belief in her own powers.

In her flounced white muslin tucked at the waist, betraying the swelling curves of her high, young breasts, Miss Peggy O'Neale was easily, at first glance, the prettiest girl in the parlor. With clustering curls of rich brown that had hidden glints of red, fair skin and bright blue eyes that fairly danced in time to her toes, she shone in the delicacy of her movements in the cotillion, seeming almost professional in her proficiency. And when she executed her *pas seul*, her dainty figure flew lightly through space, her pink-bowed satin dancing slippers seemed barely to touch the floor. With each shining step, it was evident that she swept all competitors in far corners. Mrs. Madison, herself of Celtic verve, watched with undisguised admiration the precise patterns, the pleasing gestures of the child in pirouette, and as for pretty Peg, why with Dad looking on, 'twas that the dance was the whole of life that was dear, music the only language to hear. Unconsciously, she com-

manded attention; consciously, she held it. The judge saw her marshall an audience with a toss of her curls, and dash like a dervish into a Highland Fling with a nicety that was tribute to the trouble she took, as well as to her talents. Mr. Generes was properly proud when, unhesitatingly, Dolly Madison gave Peg the crown.

In her first teen, Peggy O'Neale had her first official social triumph, wrested from others only by natural ability and inherent beauty. With a twinkling toe, she stepped on the first rung of her Pompadour ladder. Peggy pleased, not, as yet, a President, but what was more important at this stage—a President's wife. In a society where Mrs. Madison was undisputed First Lady, her endorsement was worn as an emblem. Peg had staked her flag on her native stamping ground and struck a vein of gold in Presidential preference.

3.

Peg's head was turned, fully and finally. Other girls might bear prouder names but she had a title of her own—the Carnival Queen. Cock-surely, she wore her crown.

It was too bad, and really unfortunate: for the child had social success enough and was vain. Vice-President Clinton, who lived at their hotel, worshipped her as one of the family. Senators at her father's house flattered her in cajoling for a kiss, a bit of piano music she played so well, or a minuet. Mr. O'Neale, proud of his darling's accomplishments, made the mistake of displaying them for his guests, and turned the budding girl's mind directly to the drawing room. The favorite daughter, singled out for lavish compliments, she was beginning to relish them from men. The recent public crowning made her looked upon by all Washington as the coming belle, and she might have lost her head in royal riotousness, had not death intervened, as at her birth, to detract from delight in sheer living.

About a week after the Ball, her grandfather died, and her father, as executor, had to go to the farm "one mile from Mont-

gomery county court house" to dispose of all "Personal property, consisting of sixteen valuable negroes, horses, cattle, dogs, corn, household and kitchen furniture and all kinds of farming utensils."

And it was not only that. Her father had hardly returned from his dolorous duty before Vice-President Clinton fell ill, and on April 20, 1812, died in his room at the O'Neale household.

Again the house was draped in black, again Mr. O'Neale wore a band of mourning; again Congress disbanded in honor of the dead, but this time it tramped to the home of William O'Neale to pay last respects to the second-highest officer of a free people. The papers said the spectacle of mourning was "awful." It filled the adolescent girl with double awe and fear—deaths' duration looked so long, and life's all too little. What was this waste of precious time in learning arithmetic and orthography, needlework and geography? Was not the world to be learned in the heart? Was not the knowledge of death she knew in this wise more deeply implanted than any rule or rod of book-measurement? Surely, since life was to last so short a while, were not the arts, like song and dance, and one's natural wiles, far better warders than wisdom? What, concretely, she wanted, she did not know, but she realized that hereafter school would be dry.

Peg pleaded with her father to let her stop studies. Other girls were getting ready for marriage. She was frightened when she saw his angry face, his adamant manner. He wanted his daughter to learn to talk like a lady. It was not enough that she was born to walk like a duchess. He wanted her to be able to converse with the highest circles, not show a simpering face, no matter how pretty. Talk about ceasing school stopped abruptly. Peg waited patiently for summer. Anything might happen before she began school again.

The hope that Great Britain would cease to molest American ships and seize sailors on pretext of English citizenship had had so many death-knells that, with summer, came War. Washington, the operating center for real action on southern and northern

borders, was really remote from actual fighting. Nevertheless, the militia was called out, citizens were forming independent companies, and all the men in the District were subject to military duty.

Peggy was sent back to school, since no invasion of the city seemed imminent; William O'Neale went to the Washington Jockey Club horse races, the great sporting rendezvous of the time, and soon President Madison, impervious to the bitter Federalist sneers of "Jimmie's War," took his oath of office for the second time, without disturbance by the enemy.

Before a few weeks went by, the War was brought, with devastating nearness, to the very door of the District. William O'Neale, at the advice of Secretary Monroe, his neighbor, kept horses in the cellar for family flight. This was against regulations, for all steeds were being requisitioned. Washington was blockaded and winter-bound. Peggy was soon to stop school again. Perhaps it would have been better had she had studies to keep her curiosity from martial manœuvres.

By mid-July, the enemy was within sixty miles of the city on land. The French Minister wrote that when this news arrived "a reasonable and well-grounded fear took possession of the city" and "that everyone is making ready to move."

Mrs. O'Neale and the children were left alone. The city was stripped of its able-bodied men, business was checked, theatres were closed and the daily newspaper came out with a single sheet instead of the customary two. Volunteer police patrolled the streets. Mrs. O'Neale had to send the names of all strangers registered at the tavern to the Mayor, on the lookout for spies.

One morning, eight shots were heard. It was not, however, *en avant* but retreat. After all these tremors of terror, the English fleet dropped down the river to resume cruising in Chesapeake Bay. The blockade, whatever its purpose, was at an end. A gasp of relief followed from fervent Washingtonians.

Life resumed its routine currents. Peggy, who hadn't seen even a semblance of fighting, joined new classes at school; Mr. O'Neale

participated in Masonic rites for brother naval officers like Lawrence, whose death-cry resounded ringingly in "Don't give up the ship"; and Mrs. O'Neale, with profound piety, observed all the days of humiliation and prayer set aside by Congress. Because the American navy was beginning to give British fleets anxiety by its "surprising and unaccountable successes," there was much hub-bub in the Capital. Both war patriots and war profiteers found it necessary to come frequently to headquarters where disbursement of large sums was being made. Two new banks were started, another paper began publication, tavern trade was picking up, and business expanded generally.

Whether it was in the tide of this expansion, that his means had been augmented by sale of his father's estate, or that his coffers became more copious as a consequence of the free nation-wide advertising his tavern had at the Vice-President's demise, the fall of 1813 found Mr. O'Neale offering his hospitable renown to half the inhabitants of the country. In bold type, in out-of-town papers, was to be seen: "FRANKLIN HOUSE, William O'Neale returns his compliments to the Ladies and Gentlemen of the United States for their past favors, in giving his establishment the preference, and hopes to merit a continuance of them. He is happy to state to the Public that he has built an additional house, fifty feet front and forty feet back, containing twenty rooms, completely furnished, *beds and furniture entirely new*. Ladies and Gentlemen can be furnished rooms by the day, week, or month at the establishment between the President's House and Georgetown, city of Washington."

Mr. O'Neale, thus ingeniously, not only made his House a Washington landmark, but himself a landlord of largesse. In the days of discreet and indirect advertising, he was bold and challenging. If enough people read that his hotel was given the preference, they too would prefer it on Washington stay.

His increased prosperity meant innumerable delights for his darling Peg. He showered her with dainty gifts, more like a lover than a father. Perhaps he saw craving for masculine devotion given

early vent. He was half-playful, half-parental. When he presented her with pretty hair ribbons, it was with the mock humility of an admirer; he gave her a bright girdle or a luxury like Ottar of roses with the glee of a cavalier. How was Rhoda O'Neale to prevail, in her stateliness, against such frolicsome nonsense? They were a pair, Bill and Peg. Indeed they were. But even this lad-and-lass-like *camaraderie* didn't dissuade Mr. O'Neale from keeping his daughter at school, despite very pretty pleadings. In fact, she had so far outgrown Mrs. Hayward's ladylike seminary that her tutelage was now under the care of Mr. Kirke, a somewhat stricter disciplinarian who descanted on the classics. Peg might have returned to school herself after the summer had not her father himself suggested that she stop.

The reasons were economic. Peg's pleadings had the reinforcement of war's exigencies.

Though the Secretary of War did not believe the enemy would either care or dare to take Washington, which was relatively unimportant compared to Baltimore, the British were pressing closer to the Capital. The same English troops which had recently given Napoleon his Waterloo were sent to America, and the humiliating fate it suffered was worse than St. Helena. James Monroe, sensing the ruthless march of marauders, packed State Department archives in linen bags and had them transported, posthaste, to Leesburg, Va.

He was right. Within a few hours, the battle of Bladensburg was on. Monroe rushed word to the Franklin House, where the family and guests were just sitting down to dinner. Immediately, O'Neale led the champing horses up from the cellar and warned his family to leave. Colonel Tayloe, Washington's wealthiest man who'd just built the Octagon House, was very ill and O'Neale couldn't leave him to die in danger. The others would have to go alone. Mrs. O'Neale gathered the children in the carriage, together with what they "could well carry," and with her customary capability took the reins.

"We fled," recalled Peggy, "leaving dinner on the table. Some

forty families went in procession to Montgomery, mostly women and children, with just enough men for escort.

"I remember how the dust blew, and how we cried, and with tears streaming down our grimy faces what a sorry set of people we were. . . . Gen. Daniel Parker, Attorney-General, was our guide. . . . When we reached Montgomery, we took refuge in a double log-house, the two houses communicating by a hallway."

While the O'Neales rode to temporary safety, the Franklin House was the scene of conferences. Cabinet ministers collected there to decide the next move. Otherwise, there was no business at the tavern; nor in any of the executive offices. The only business which prevailed was that of evacuating the city. Except for a foolhardy few, Dolly Madison among them, the Capital was forsaken. Washington lay in a hush of foredoom.

About dusk the next day, Redcoats arrived, enflaming the city. It was eight before the Capitol was reached and set on fire. At eleven, a detachment of soldiers with torches stalked past the Octagon House where the French Minister resided, and went to the White House, which was also enkindled, not, however, before Cockburn enjoyed the spread dinner left by Dolly Madison in last-minute flight.

For miles about the Capital, flames could be seen. At Montgomery, all was pandemonium.

"We watched the fires in Washington—the public buildings and rope-walk burning down," Peggy reported. "The people were very much excited. All sorts of absurdities were committed. The woman of the house was frantic, continually moving the furniture from one end of the establishment to the other, and back again. My mother said: 'My dear woman, what in the world are you doing; cannot I help you?'"

"'O,' she answered nervously, 'the British are coming, and I must get this furniture moved.'"

Mrs. O'Neale saw that the woman was hysterical. She turned aside in bitter brooding. Peggy had gathered the children about her

to comfort them. When she saw her mother's face, she jumped up and ran toward her. Silently, she touched her hand. Neither spoke.

"We stood there watching the flames and wondering what might be the fate of our own houses," she remembered much later.

Suddenly, Mrs. O'Neale spoke, straight out of her bitter brooding. "My mother said that if our property was gone she did not want to see my father again; she could not bear to see him a ruined man."

Peggy clutched tighter the hand that lay tense in hers. A shaft of mature understanding shone from the flames and her mother's comment. In that moment, she grew up.

After midnight, a violent thunderstorm quenched the flames but not English venom.

The next morning, the War and Treasury buildings were burnt, and wherever embers were impossible to check, private property also suffered collapse. Dr. William Thornton, Superintendent of the Patent Office, pleaded with Colonel Jones, at the point of a sword, that the destruction of this "museum of the arts" would mean a "loss to all the world." Dr. Thornton, poet, painter and practical physician, penetrated the invading officer's skin. Both the Patent and Post Offices were spared.

A second visitation from heaven came on the second day of the invader's campaign. It was a tornado, which swept flames, ripped off roofs and carried chimneys skyward, serving only to further the damage the British begun. The Capitol, White House, and all public buildings lay in ruin: blackened, charred caverns where before had been shining white walls. The Redcoats, having heaped insult to injury in their choice of conflagration, left their camp fires and their wounded that evening and hastened to Benedict to board ship. The Goths had gone from another Tiber.

The tornado and the British had spared the Franklin House, for when Peggy returned the next morning she found their home "unmolested."

"General Ross," she said, "was the most humane of the British

officers. After the White House was burned and pictures destroyed, he declared there should be no further destruction of property; that they had been kindly received, and so should behave kindly in return. We were not disturbed except by strollers; but the terror of war was upon us; spies in women's clothes had haunted the town while we were away, and we still shuddered at the sight of a red-coat."

General Cockburn, she said, was cruel. She heard the story when she was thirteen, and remembered it all her life, perhaps regretful that it didn't happen at her own house.

Swaggering British officers stopped in hotels and private houses for their meals. At Suter's tavern, Mrs. Suter prepared a dinner for them. She knew they were enemy officers and didn't hesitate to express her dislike of their wanton destruction of private property.

"General Ross is not so bad," Mrs. Suter said while serving them, "but as for Cockburn, if I could I would put a spider in his coffee. Indeed, I am not sure but I would poison him if he sat at my table."

"Madame," one officer politely requested, "will you oblige me by tasting this coffee before I drink it? I am General Cockburn."

At every turn in the District of Columbia, the British politely but pointedly humbled Americans.

Their intent was plain: the only reason they invaded Washington was to show their contempt for what it symbolized. To the citizens of the Capital, and the country-at-large later, this deliberate destruction of the representative buildings of their Republic was degrading. National mortification was complete. Faith in the Federal City now wore a funereal face. There were ashes in many mouths at the public pyre. The center of the Union was shattered; it should, then, be shifted.

"I don't suppose the Government will ever return to Washington," Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith, a society novelist, wrote her sister, who was one of the many in the country who was "no friend to Washington," and the *National Intelligencer* reported "indistinct

suggestions buzzed abroad . . . to remove the seat of government temporarily or permanently from this place."

O'Neale, always a rabid partisan of the place, determined that now, if ever, his immediate action was needed. Hadn't he, of his own volition, spent three months in New Jersey to defeat such a plan in time of peace? He must redouble his efforts against Philadelphia and other cities which made Congress such glamorous promises of land grants for Public Buildings. One even offered as bait that "board for members will be provided in the town at ten dollars per week instead of sixteen dollars as charged by Washington hotels." Mr. O'Neale had a double design, then, in his reinforced efforts against removal. The President's house, until repairs should be made, had been transferred to the Octagon House, which the French Minister had already vacated in favor of Philadelphia. The Russian Minister had followed suit, and so had the Swedish and Holland emissaries. Plainly, something had to be done. O'Neale rented his new Franklin House to the Government for use as the Treasury Department until a new building should be constructed. Mrs. O'Neale could run the smaller house on the side, while he engaged his efforts in preventing transference of the Capital.

In the emergency, Peg could be drafted. Sacrifices had to be made. Mr. Jefferson was offering to sell his library to replace the one destroyed, public spirited citizens gave freely toward rebuilding governmental offices, and Congress, after a closely-contested vote, conceded that it would rather remain in the now cramped quarters of the still undeveloped city than go elsewhere.

When Peg walked about Washington with her mother, saw the "poor Capitol" where "nothing but blackened walls remained," and the President's House showing not a bit of white wall, she somehow sensed that she would be called upon in adult measure. Sam Houston, a disabled soldier from Tennessee, saw the ruins, too, and his "blood boiled." While citizens were "slowly and despondently resuming business" and one schoolmaster altruistically advised parents that he would accept students, just to keep them off the

streets, whether paid or not, Peg's apprenticeship as aide to her father began, for she did not return to school. At last her wish was granted. She was to have direct contact with the world; at leisure, to draw her deductions of what it was she wished of life.

Peg, at thirteen, thought herself a full-fledged woman. Daily association with adults about the Franklin House had not only set her an example but matured her beyond the bounds of adolescence.

The things she heard in the public parlors contributed to her grown-up feeling, for she comprehended them all.

Meanwhile, the War went on. She heard the tattle of the tavern: how Dolly Madison bravely saved the priceless Stuart canvas of George Washington; how some women went out of their senses with shock; how negroes hid in the cellars and evidenced attachment to masters; how the invading soldiers stripped the poor of their clothing, even women and children, and how the wine in the White House was consumed by the American Army. She learned, then, better than any dictionary could teach her, the meaning of pillage and pity.

Late in the afternoon one day in mid-February, a "coach and four foaming steeds" thundered down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Octagon House, the temporary White House, bearing the dove of compromise. Before nightfall, the cry of "Peace, Peace" rang outward from the President's levee, where John Freeman, the butler, was told to "serve wine without stint," and some were drunk for two days with joy and liquor. Not so the Cabinet members, however, for they thought of the useless fighting, the loss of men during the delay between the signing and delivery of the message.

The long, slow ocean voyage prevented news of the Treaty of Ghent from reaching this country before the middle of the Peace Winter, at the same time that word came of General Jackson's miraculous victory over the brutal "Beauty and Booty" cry of the British at New Orleans. Peg was thrilled that her father knew Andrew Jackson, the Hero of the Hermitage, the Second Father

of his Country, who was being feted at the Octagon House. When he came up the broad mahogany staircase to the drawing room on the second floor, even the trained slaves, resembling Egyptian sculpture as they held candles, made motions to see him. There was something universally appealing about him, something sincere which stirred all Washington.

Peg, though, didn't see him personally. Her father gave her graphic accounts of his receptions. He attempted to describe the gown Queen Dolly wore, but the best he could do was to say it was pink, lilac and silver, and that the bodice was a bit low. Peg was impatient. Dad was a dear but he had eyes only for his old friend and hero. She wanted to see for herself how General Jackson looked in uniform, what the ladies wore and said in this splendid society and watch the flaming lights of the thousand wax candles which lit the hall. She saw it as a spectacle; in secret, conjured herself shining near the center. Her social graces would give her entr e. Surely, Mrs. Madison, who'd crowned her Carnival Queen, would be gracious. She loved to watch the President's wife at the Octagon windows feeding a macaw but she was just as interested in the Quaker Lady's gorgeous costumes as in the bird's brilliant plumage.

It was by her own gracious ways that she continued to captivate Congressmen at her father's house. William T. Barry, new Congressman from Kentucky, wrote his wife of his comfortable quarters at O'Neale's and mentioned "a charming little girl, the daughter of Mr. O'Neale who very frequently plays on the piano and entertains with agreeable songs."

Peg would only have been half pleased with the Kentucky gentleman's compliment. She no longer considered herself a "little girl," nor did many of the men who watched her as she glided across the public parlors of the tavern, graceful in her Grecian-like gown, exposing her neck with its nape made bare by her "turning up the hind hair close," the newest coiffure, token of her coming of age. She had known death, destruction and desire. Sinuosity was in her tread; sensuosity her fountain-head. When Mrs. Madison

had made her her choice, Peg's charm was childish. Three years' time and the sudden thrust into tavern service had made her more than girlish. She was then in bud; now, in bloom.

More than once bitter animosities were undercurrents in the room when she lightly favored one, then another. Already she was a well-practiced coquette. Mrs. O'Neale, too wise to draw Peg's attention to her amatory importance, grew apprehensive, however, when she overheard talk of a duel between two admirers. Contest, the very pith of life to Peg and Papa, was anathema to Rhoda O'Neale. She warned William that complications were predestined for Peg, and he had better be on the lookout. What! His beautiful Peg losing her head? Never!

This parental admixture of anxiety and admiration led her to secrecy. Already she had an active will. When one caught a glimpse of her, it was never in repose, but all arrested motion: flying curls, flashing eyes, nostrils aquiver with disdain or delight and full upper lip drawn tight over strong teeth.

The Indian summer in which she was nearing sixteen saw her ripening to that beauty which was to blind men to her defects, and women to her virtues. In the fresh sod of her heart, Captain Root, of the United States Army, had planted tentacles of tenderness. Precipitously, one day, she answered his protestations of endearment: she would elope with him that night. Quickly, she sketched plans. Two hours after midnight, he was to be in the garden below her window. She would secrete a strong rope with which her father tied the horses; then descend when she saw him waiting. Her admirer was astonished; breathless. It was not true. Could she really be bestowing herself upon him? She was to stun with matrimonial madness more than once.

At two, she saw his silhouette and swung the rope to the ground. Two minutes later, she was lowering herself to earth and so was the flower-pot of geraniums from off her window sill. The law of gravity brought the plant to a smashing impact against the window pane of the first floor before she wriggled down the rope to her

lover's quivering clasp. The seconds were centuries; the situation grave. Suppose someone should awake! Hardly could have the lover reflected that he was liable to arrest, that she was a minor, when O'Neale strode into the garden. To Captain Root, he was rude; to Peggy, ruthless. Root, he knew, was only an accessory. Peggy had assented of her own free will, he was sure, and she must suffer the severe punishment.

She was sent to her room, this time to sleep. The next morning, to show that her will wasn't broken, she refused food. At the dinner hour, she asked permission to go into the garden. It was not, however, with any sense of remorse or penance that she surveyed the scene of her recent disgrace, for everyone in the household had been awakened by that early-morning altercation in the garden. There lay the brick-red pot, and the uprooted red geranium. Slowly, in supreme retaliation, she crunched her heel on the soft blood-red petals which had been the unwitting spoke in the wedding wheel she put in motion. She always struck back,—in silent action. It was not Captain Root she regretted so much, as that her own plans had been spiked. She was to be no Penelope to his memory, for love for her father was quickly to unravel the fibrous threads of their flimsy romance.

O'Neale's memory of her will power soon sent her plans spinning. She was to leave Washington. What, to be sent away! Where? She was to go to Madam Nau's fashionable French finishing school in New York. He himself would take her to the home of De Witt Clinton, Mayor of the metropolis for so many years past and new Governor. Mr. Clinton had several sons near her age. She should not be lonesome on holidays with the Governor as sponsor. Though this was in the nature of novelty, she had no wish to go. Forced back in the classroom, cloistered, she was being treated as a child again. She dared not be rebellious, for her father's determination was undaunted by tears, prayers of forgiveness, pleading pouts, or promises to be different. He was angry at her wilfulness.

It was a bitter winter. Michael Shriner, a sailor on duty at the Navy Yard, noted in his diary that there were "three black spots in the sun." Bitterly, the sailor's sun obscured for her, too, Miss Margaret O'Neale, who might by now have been Mrs. Root, with her father, took the Pilot stage which had one of its principal stops at their tavern. Her horse-hair trunk was strapped to the back. She took her seat with a sullen air, and sat with a stiffness strange to her normal bearing. Her mobile mouth was pressed to spiteful silence, her usually bright eyes unsocial, stoically unaware. Even her bonnet stood off her carefully composed face with an air of belligerence; her heavy woollen cloak was drawn close to keep her intentional coolness compact.

Her father tried a jocund remark or two but received no response. Contrary to custom, he saw that this time Peg intended to make no trilling treble to his buffoon bass. Her strength of will staggered him, who knew her so well. Well, he'd let her alone and she'd thaw out. Her fluid liveliness in time would reassert itself. How pretty she looked in her glacial anger, crystallizing the pure formal beauty of her features! But probably she'd seen in her mirror how striking she looked in defiance. Trust Peg to make the most of every dramatic episode at her own or another's expense.

"Steamboats were the wonder of the world; railroads undreamed of; turn pike roads scarcely begun, stage coaches slow, inconvenient and cumbersome. The daughter of one senator who wished to enjoy the delights of the new Capital came five hundred miles on horseback at her father's side, and the wife of one member rode fifteen hundred miles on horseback through Indian settlements." No wonder there were so few women in Washington, and no wonder Peg hated to leave.

Snow beset their path, and the more northerly they went through Baltimore and Philadelphia, where they stopped overnight, the more severe the storms grew. The slight chill of chastisement which barred filial warmth between father and daughter was fostered by the increasing frigidity. Only when they got to New York did she

brighten a bit, and her eyes opened with excitement on lower Broadway at Stollenweck's Panorama. Perhaps if she were allowed to see some of these things, school might be bearable. She asked her father if she might. He said that Mr. Clinton should be the judge of what a young girl should see. She didn't remember Mr. Clinton at their house, for she'd been only four when he was a Senator, before returning to New York to become Mayor.

On their arrival at 9 Cherry Street, John Mann was just leaving after consultation about the proposed Erie Canal. When Peg saw Clinton's massive head, she was, for the first time, intimidated by a man. He lectured the young lady who had attempted so indecorous an elopement. With Dutch thoroughness, he made her feel that she had committed a sin against God, instead of herself, in this immature choice of a husband. He scared her, that was settled. Mr. O'Neale left, feeling Mr. Clinton's severity salutary. And then, he didn't want to soften in Peg's sight. After the Saturday night social circle left the Clinton home, the master of the household, with methodical regularity, wrote in his diary of the day's happenings, chronicling Miss O'Neale's arrival.

The next morning was the Sabbath, and the "snow storm continued all day." She had time for prayer before beginning her French finishing school which threatened her freedom.

Nothing availed, however, for on Monday morning, when the temperature was twenty-seven, they drove around to Chambers Street and Mr. Clinton "put Miss O'Neale at Madame Nau's." The disposition was about as wanting in warmth. Peg's spirits were congealed, her vanity deflated. The only male visitor she had was Mr. Clinton, who called daily until Erie Canal Commission meetings, his pet project, took up his time. But she was glad to be spared the ordeal of a daily dose of discipline, capsules of criticism from a self-contained nature so different from her own. School cast a chill over Peg's fever. Even when she poured out her tale of thwarted love to Julia Dickinson, daughter of New Jersey's Governor and her best school chum, all seemed beyond hope.

One day she was mysteriously revitalized. Since Captain Root had faithfully followed her, and since the schoolmistress was French, meetings between the enamoured young lovers were soon arranged. Peggy threw the whole school in a glow, for the girls were at that age of complete susceptibility to the glamour of a *grande passion*. While Peggy received Captain Root with Madame Nau's permission, after her persuasion that she be allowed to meet him in company with others, her friends stood guard at the door and left the lovers alone together as much as possible. They probably envied her her conquest of the dashing young officer. In peripheral secretiveness, too, they probably read the best-selling book on Broadway that season: "Practical Hints to Young Females on the duties of a Wife, a Mother and a Mistress of a Family" which had the dedication from Solomon—"Every wise woman buildeth her home, but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands."

Peggy felt that she had pulled down her house before she had built it. She decided to try again. In exile from Washington with its many men, even with Captain Root's undivided attention, romance showed threadbare. In a long letter she implored her father to take her home, promising that hereafter "neither root nor branch" should ever tear her from him again. This Mr. O'Neale repeated amid much chuckling, delighted by her satirical sense which could so soon use her late lover's name in a jest. Lawmakers were regaled with the lawless girl's sprightly saying. Her father capitulated: the pretty pun had served its purpose. Before the term was up, she bid Julia a fond good-bye.

Governor Clinton's farewell comment tickled her. It was so unlike the stiff guardian he'd seemed before. She was in love, he confirmed, not unkindly. And since she twisted trusted caretakers to her side by fervent persuasion, her return, he concluded, "was just as well." He probably thought she'd get in less trouble at home among many men than away from the domestic roof with but one. When O'Neale told him Peg's pun, they both smiled openly.

No doubt Peggy smiled covertly into her cape collar in the stage-coach homeward.

Why not? Pretty Peggy had made her first *bon mot*, with wit had won her way over stern men.

4.

Peg's final finishing school was the tavern. The Franklin House was now the foremost hotel in the city. When O'Neale confined his clientele to Congressional members, he served no drink at table, but "each one who wants applies to the landlord and it is procured for him," as one guest wrote home. But he gave them their sixteen dollars' weekly worth, for here is a typical day's menu, culled from a passing guest's note book.

Breakfast was made up of "coffee, warm buckwheat cakes, chicken corncakes, toast, boiled fresh pork, Etc."

Dinner touched the spot with "Goose, duck, chicken pye, boiled corn beef, Roast Fresh Beef, hominy made of dry corn and beans boiled whole, sweet and Irish potatoes, custards, roast apples, crackers and butter with cheese preserves and cyder."

Supper, which the guest described as a "good one but not splendid," consisted of "Ham, Turkey, Chicken, roast beef, chicken pye, pudding, crackers and apples."

While the fare remained more or less alike, and the charge still \$1.25 a day for board, the passing public demanded its liquors, so O'Neale opened a bar. His tavern was now one of the principal stops of the stages which ran both ways between the Capital, Philadelphia and Richmond and was the resort of important strangers from north and south. Military and naval men, too, made it their headquarters, and when they wanted hard drink they wanted it quickly.

The atmosphere was practically that of a pub. It was now more complex and coarse than when it was a boarding house, more subject to the exciting demands of a variegated travelling public. This daily diversity suited Peg's temperament.

Into these surroundings, Peggy came with eagerness, glad to be back among men instead of schoolgirls. She was hail-fellow, too well met. Though possessed of a native respect for men, she disbelieved in spirit the theory taught to all women of her time "that there is an inequality in the sexes, and that for the economy of the world, the men, who were to be the guardians and lawgivers, had not only the greater share of bodily strength bestowed on them, but those also of reason and resolution."

It was impossible for her to disregard the gambling and grandeur, the horse-racing and hypocrisy of women she saw about her. When even so tight-laced a Puritan as John Quincy Adams and a gentleman of such professed piety as the Reverend Manasseh Cutler attended the horse-races, what could one do? The Senate adjourned for three days, on the excuse that the ceiling had to be plastered. The House adjourned, too, but had no such pretext.

This speculative sport was most popular, but cards were more perennial. Every tavern had its whist room, and Pennsylvania Avenue was lined by faro banks with good sideboard fare. Games sometimes lasted from Thursday until Monday, when the Senate suspended business. Ten-pin alleys were patronized by ruddy Westerners; and billiards by the Northerners and men from foreign legations. It was Sir Augustus Foster, secretary of the British Legation, who noted that "Loo was the innocent diversion of the ladies who, when they were loosed, pronounced the word in a very mincing manner."

But that was the last thing women would have dreamed of admitting, even behind the safeguard of marriage, for they were told that unchastity was regarded as "superlatively criminal in women" but in men was "viewed in a far less disadvantageous light." The ethical double-standard had *double-entendre* in Mrs. Clay's observation that she didn't mind Henry's incessant card playing, so long as he won. And her friend, Mrs. Smith, society reporter of the time, could excoriate "what I hope will not often be seen in this country, an almost naked woman . . . her back, her

bosom, part of her waist, and her arms were uncovered and the rest of her form visible (!!!). . . . Several other ladies sent her word, if she wished to meet them . . . she must promise to have more clothes on. . . .”

Washington ladies were scandalized: Thomas Law, elderly, eccentric Englishman, was divorcing his wife, Elizabeth Parke Custis, Mrs. Washington's granddaughter. It was unheard-of for an American woman to be treated with such indignity. What if she was a young virago to his tired tranquillity? And for leaders of American society to conduct themselves with such callous indifference to the effects of their marital rift caused a commotion. They were heedless to his plea:

“Look not in public places for a wife;
Be not deluded by the charms of sight.”

What more did he want? The old fool. Didn't he have three Indian sons, or “Asiatic” ones as Washingtonians called them? He had lived on three continents and probably had women a-plenty. Why couldn't he be content with his high-spirited young beauty of nineteen, and let her have her way? Divorce was practically death for her social career. The poor dear. It was a pity!

Peg soon became a subject for the ladies' palaver. Several months after she returned from school, men began to tell them of the beauty who tended bar at O'Neale's. That girl took a man's measure and was as free in manner as would contribute to his merriment. Plainly, some of them drank to her not only with their eyes. The more men praised her fire, the more ladies privately roasted her. Her reputation, before it was on the open market, was seared. She was impulsive of speech, spontaneous of smile, and made a man feel welcome with a real woman's warmth. The ladies sniffed; then she was not a lady!

In part, Peg became hostess. Despite her mother's wise objections, the social end of the Inn was left much in her hands. Mr. O'Neale

was having his difficulties. Money was tight. Peter Rogers, a saddler from "the green fields of Erin and tyranny" come "to the green streets of Washington and liberty" advised that it was necessary to "take this method of acquainting philanthropists, that on or before the first day of June he intends quitting the city, and ere his departure wishes to pay and be paid." George Pitt, a more reserved tavern-keeper, likewise addressed his "respective friends: This is no joking, but real and serious. . . . My books are wastefordised, journalized, ledgardized and proved according to law. I therefore give this public notice, and in a very laconic manner, that unless you all to a man pay up your respective balances due, on or before the first day of April, my birthday, I will not be made a fool of, or a tool of, for after that period, those who are delinquent will be sued without respect to persons." He returned "unfeigned and sincere thanks to regular and transient CASH CUSTOMERS."

Mr. O'Neale, for all his imputed impudence, did not resort to this manner of money-getting. He did advertise, though: "For Sale or Rent, the Franklin House, on Pennsylvania Avenue, that extensive establishment containing seventy rooms, without or with the furniture belonging to it; possession will be given on the first day of June, by which time it will be put in complete order, as the Treasury has removed to Permanent Building. The terms will be liberal, from one to ten years credit will be given for the purchase money, with interest."

It was with interest that patrons of the Franklin House surveyed Peg; with patronage she saw them, for there were too many unattached men to attribute too much importance to one. She was beginning to enjoy contrapuntal relationships of conversation and politics with many men: she was to continue to do so for fifty years. The salon always stimulated her. The early Washington barroom was an extra-Congressional meeting place where men dared to speak openly on politics as they could not do by their own hearths or in friends' homes. To this Peg listened. Her slender, faultlessly proportioned figure and her ready repartee made men turn to her,

men warmed by wine and with tongues loosened by liquor. It was a strong sun whose rays poured over Peg, but the daughter of "rollicking William O'Neale" was no Icarus for this adolescent incubator. Here, her sensibilities were toughened, her wiles allowed full play.

Now when Congressmen flattered her, she kept them at their distance at the same time that she "flirted fearlessly and furiously" with them. Free of manner, and free of speech, she was contagiously cheerful to the entire company. No one could boast of marked attention from her. Because of this aggregate sportiveness, her lively liking for all, her father's fear that she might attempt another premature marriage with other than a lawmaker was quieted.

In reality, though, she was ripe for mating, secretly resenting the fate which kept her kind to all, and not too kind, or too unkind, to one. Most girls married at thirteen, or thereabouts, then. She was wasting her life, she sighed, in a day when grandmothers of twenty-seven were not uncommon in nearby states. But the memory of her father's anger about Captain Root forbade action. Forbearance was necessary, for he still thought her his "darling Peg," and not a woman ready to exercise the talents they'd mutually developed.

Other girls were going gravely to the altar. She had tried to go in gaiety and had been punished. An observer, remarking the pretty girls of Washington (and Peg was the prettiest) said "as there are but few of them, however, in proportion to the great number of men who frequent the places of amusement in the Federal city, it was one of the most marrying places of the whole continent. . . ."

There were old men in breeches and silk stockings, pompous with wealth, and younger men in pantaloons, the latest from Paris, whose only gold glittered from gilt buttons on bright waistcoats. Despite the enormous preponderance of men, old and young, sprightly and senile, Peg never saw the second she wished to make her husband, though she actively pined for one. A strange male assortment made the most of their moments with frolicsome Peggy O'Neale, who was always heedlessly crossing the line of conven-

tionality in talking politics or gay *badinage*, her bark bigger than her bite. They stimulated her, but none swept her off her feet again. Washington Irving had found in the Capital "the most complete medley of characters I ever mingled amongst," while another noted that "there are here peculiar facilities for forming acquaintances, for a stranger cannot be long here, before it is generally known."

Yet it was a stranger she saw on the first of June in 1816 when she opened the windows wide to savour the morning freshness. Strong and sunlit he looked on his sorrel mare. She stared, never having seen such beauty in man. He returned the stare at her equally rare loveliness.

She flushed when he entered the tavern that afternoon. Her father made the formal introduction, for her ready tongue lay quivering against her teeth in embarrassment: "John Bowie Timberlake, Purser, United States Navy." The blond god in blue bowed. That evening they were engaged. Two weeks later they were married, on the same day that John Henry Eaton, a member of the State House of Representatives in Tennessee, celebrated his twenty-sixth birthday. A brother naval officer, Edward Coates Pinkney, called by Edgar Allan Poe the best lyric poet of his time, when he saw her in Baltimore later, dedicated "to the most beautiful woman in America," a well-known song whose last stanza perhaps best characterizes her charm:

"I fill this cup to one made up
Of loveliness alone,
A woman of her gentle sex
The seeming paragon.
Her health! And would on earth there were
Some more of such a frame,
Then life might be all poetry
And weariness a name!"

Peggy had her first epithalamium, inspired by her joy in the bridal bed she chose for herself.

BOOK II: ADRIFT

I.

PEGGY O'NEALE, who took homage from men as a matter of course, now impetuously adored one. She was an impulsive bride, binding her love to the loveliest being she'd set eyes on.

The union was blessed with beauty; in fact, it was almost beatific. As they stood before the altar at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Georgetown, the pair embodied virility: she was virginal and alive; he was handsome and heartily glad to wive so glowing a girl. She seemed to have shed some of the sophistication of the tavern and looked radiantly remote in her bridal-gown. The O'Neales, relieved by the ritual of the responsibility of their first-born's future, indulged parental pride and self-pity. Both frankly rejoiced that there were no further complications with guests, no impediment to entrusting her to the groom's care. Rhoda was happy for Peg that her husband was a good man; William that he was so surpassingly handsome, even though he wasn't the lawmaker of his imaginings. Her dowry was her delight.

The wedding was large and "well-attended," no doubt by most of Peg's hopeless admirers. The *National Intelligencer*, chronicling social events, two days later recorded as married "in the city on Tuesday evening, by the Rev. Mr. Balch, John B. Timberlake, Esq., Purser, U. S. Navy, to Miss Margaret O'Neale, daughter of Mr. William O'Neale."

In an adjoining column was a headline announcing "the first biography of General Jackson composed by Mr. John Henry Eaton, of Nashville," a young lawyer who possessed "talents, learning and industry." Its publication was a national event, for there was much curiosity concerning the General. O'Neale, even though he didn't personally know the author of this authentic and "highly inter-

esting work," subscribed for the life-story of his friend who became famous in the late war.

Timberlake would have to take a look at that book when it came out. He'd fought in the War of 1812, was on the "President" when she was captured. Their courtship had been such a whirlwind of passional recognition that Peg still knew practically nothing about him.

Of his recountings, she remembered only that he had been at the New York Navy Yard when she was there at Madame Nau's, and she didn't know! Why had she wanted to go home, and why had he ever come to Washington afterward?

Before the "President" was captured, he patiently explained, Commander Decatur ordered his goods thrown overboard to lighten the ship, and after capture, the British took his books, so he couldn't settle satisfactorily with the sailors, to whom he sold stuffs charged against their pay. And then, when the "United States" captured the "Macedonia," New York gave a great dinner for the crew which was allowed to attend *en masse* but most of which took advantage of the occasion to desert, owing him more money than pay due them. The penalties of victory for him were greater than those of defeat. His accounts, therefore, were in bad state, and he was in bad odour with the Navy Department. Not that it was his fault. He'd come to Washington to see if he couldn't straighten things out and get on board another big boat. It was pretty profitable. And then, and then he'd been landlocked by bonnie Peggy O'Neale, the beauty who would soon bear him a little one. Shall they pray for a boy to take care of her when her Johnny had joined the boys in Davy Jones' locker?

He was vibrant and irresponsible. There was no resisting him. He'd seen strange ports and strangest sort of humankind. The rhythmic beat of the sea was in his veins. Above all, he was a vagabond voyager. There'd be no telling when he'd take to ship, no gaging when he'd return, or whether he'd even hanker for home in a foreign harbour. There was an immediacy in his urgent love-

making that sent blood warm from lip to lip, and life from limb to limb. The blond god might return to his watery domain; chain him, claim him while he's here! While honeymooners, the harum-scarum pair, so wholesome in their pure physical harmony, had had an impassioned idyll. But that was soon past.

"Just thirteen months after the wedding day," their baby boy was born. Peg's maternity left a wound never healed. Her husband's irresponsibility continued.

Immediately following the wedding, Timberlake had wisely taken Peg away from the complex attractions of hotel life to private residence in Washington. However, old habit was still strong, so the newly-weds spent much time at the tavern. Peg took her social life out in talk; her handsome and affectionate husband took his in drink. For the golden Adonis had an Achillean heel—alcohol. He was never viciously drunk but only stupidly so. Some of the gossips said it was a shame. That pretty girl Mrs. Madison crowned could have done better. Socially, even though she was only an Inn-keeper's daughter, it seemed a mistake. Lawmakers who knew her swift brain said it was a misalliance. She should have waited. Perhaps a Congressman would have fancied her, though she was rather free, and not quite formal enough for a statesman's wife, who should be subdued. Peg's mother, now, was more the type, but her father, O Heavens forbid! The baby would probably be handsome by heritage.

Timberlake, troubled by his unfortunate naval mix-up, couldn't settle his mind to business. Fatherhood, however, forced a reckoning of his private accounts. He'd turn to mercantile marts. He could sell goods on land as well as on sea. But his medallion had already been minted for Peg. She knew he would fret out his heart because he was kept from the ocean, and with excessive drink worry himself to despair about his business frustrations on the sea. If only he could be helped, shown that if he worked on land to pay up his debts to the government, he might yet sail again. But there was no one who could give him such calm, such assurance.

Meanwhile, there was the wonder of the child to bewitch them. Was he more like his father, she wondered, and would he, too, want to go off some day? Soon, she had her answer. The sixth month in which she nursed him saw his death. Now it was she who was in despair, she who needed calm and assurance that there would be other babes, and a steadier home-life and husband. Who was to gainsay that a kind Providence may have been snatching her son from a sorrier fate on earth? Was this Timberlake union blighted, or was she bitter in her loss? She was extremely happy with her husband as a male; could she mould him into the man her son might have become?

Not quite eighteen, bereft of her boy, defrauded of wifehood's peace by a handsome, desired husband too often incapacitated in his cups, she was utterly devoted to him and dejected by his delinquency. Peg had dispensed liquor too long not to know that many men who drank in moderation under its influence more brilliantly interpreted their thoughts. She had seen strong men mix strong drink and strong talk, but never had she beheld a sailor gulp glass after glass in despondent silence.

After the boy's death, they became more tenderly bound, she in sympathy for his weakness, he for her suffering and delight in him. That year he gave more strict attention to his business, more stricture to stimulants. Timberlake might have held his place in Peg's heart, despite his weakness, had not a new being shown how deeply she admired spiritual strength. This person came in the guise of a guest at the tavern. It was John Henry Eaton, bearing a note of introduction from Andrew Jackson saying "you will find Major Eaton a man of acquirements, a constant scholar, and a gentleman of great private worth."

Both John Bowie Timberlake and his wife, Peg, were separately to weigh his worth and not find him wanting.

2.

Eaton came crystallized and self-contained. He had will and wit,

cloaked in gentleness. Prudent where the Purser was precipitous, controlled where he was diffuse, quietly effective to the other's effluent bravado, his presence was orchestral to Timberlake's rustic hornpipe.

Only twenty-eight, Eaton was one of the youngest Senators in the country. He had light auburn hair and "fine, large hazel eyes" that were "soft and cool and steady," eyes "with great expression." His figure was "commanding" and his countenance "serene . . . and dignified."

Washington knew him as the biographer of General Jackson and as a progressive lawyer whose personality had drawn him to the state legislature in Tennessee. His oratory and insight, superior to the needs of pioneer lawmaking, attracted local attention. Being both youthful enough to appreciate the lusty life and opportunities of Tennessee and sufficiently urbane and conciliatory to compromise her needs with the Union, he would make an excellent national representative, colleagues thought. Accordingly, when Senator George W. Campbell resigned to become Minister to Russia, Eaton's activities were transferred to the national amphitheatre.

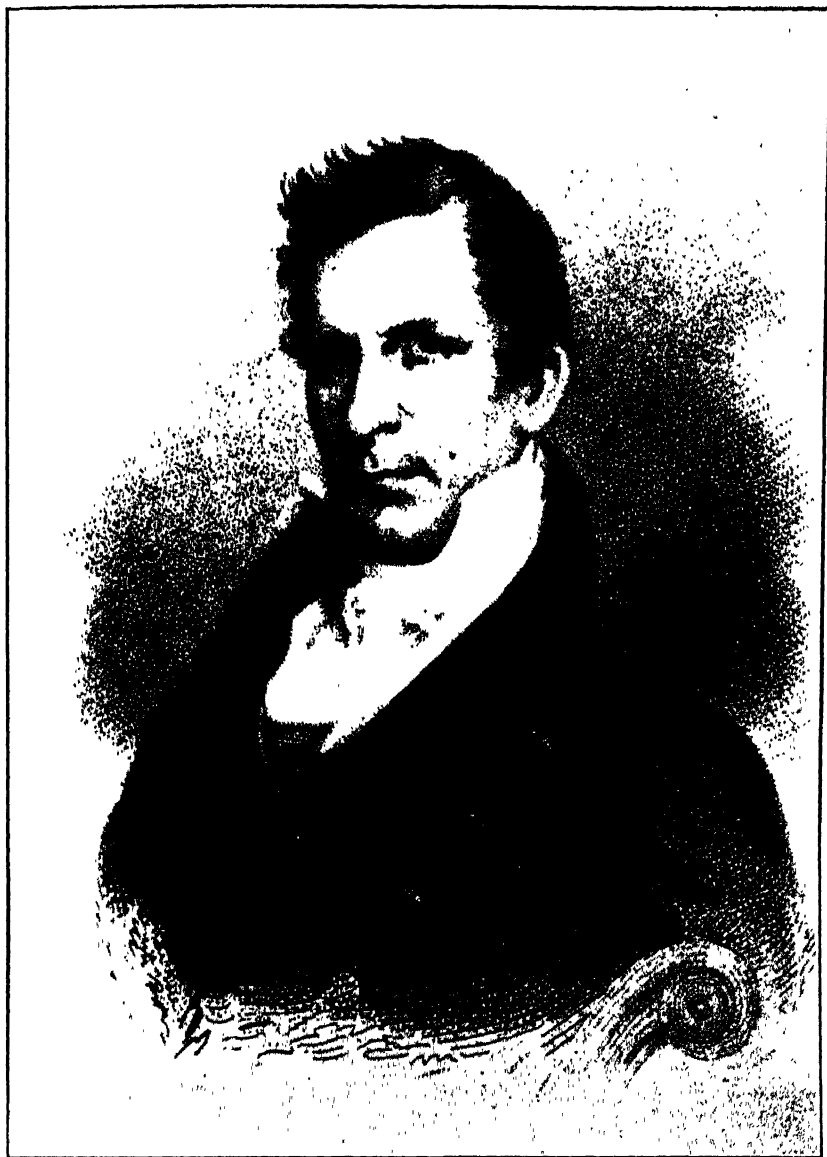
In addition to the official credentials presented to the Senate, he might have added—not actuated by overweening ambition or avarice—an altruistic attitude somewhat alien to a Congress composed of party profiteers such as Henry Clay and Martin Van Buren and an Administration with each Cabinet Minister, especially Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, aspiring to the Presidency.

A man's man essentially, like Andrew Jackson, he had something in common with most members of the Senate. His ancestry was linked with North and South. Theophilus Eaton, a wealthy Puritan from London, headed a band which settled in New Haven, Conn., and became its first Governor. His wife went mad from religious persecution kindly called fanaticism which scourged her because she was no slavey to the Sabbath. Her trial for lying is one of the curiosities of early New England. Theophilus had an eccentric brother, who also dared to differ paganwise from Puritan life.

Nathaniel Eaton persuaded John Harvard to endow an institution, of which he became headmaster. Having laid the bedrock for education in the North he loved but could not live with, he went South, founding the family from which Eaton sprang. Eaton's own father, for whom he was named, was coroner of Halifax County, N. C., and a representative in the Assembly. Young John Henry decided to emulate him and attended the University of North Carolina. When his father died, he decided with his mother that it would be best to throw the family lot with the luck of the West, where his father had acquired 4,500 acres of land from a relative's estate. They went to Franklin, Tennessee, where the family fortune developed considerable land and where John began the study and practice of law. Thus in a single century in a new country his heritage gave him Yankee shrewdness from the North, indolence from birth in the South, and tolerance from his experience in the West.

Rather inclined to his library than law, he loved life more than either and could appreciate equally William O'Neale's uncultivated witticisms and John Randolph's ornate diatribes against the imbecilities of his time. He had a private income independent of his labors, so had no need to hold office for livelihood and was indifferent to vote-getting measures for himself. With an international outlook, he believed the Indians should be allowed to perpetuate their ethnic identity on land set aside for them, peacefully subverting their hostility, and that the penal code of the country served only cruelty, not conscience. He was liberal, enlightened, faithful to the interests of the community he represented but not blinded by them.

An engaging conversationalist, worldly with women, he soon became a social favorite. He fast found himself a favorite with the Timberlakes and O'Neales, too, and made the Franklin House the headquarters for the new Democrats from the West. Timberlake and Eaton were drawn to each other. They were both Southerners who had ventured from the leisurely, restricted life of the plan-



Drawn and engraved from life in 1829 by J. B. Longacre.

JOHN HENRY EATON

tation-owner, and had international horizons. Travel to Timberlake was exhilarating; philosophic probing of humanity's progress to Eaton was intoxicating. When Eaton learned that the losses Timberlake sustained while in naval service had caused so serious a set-back in his ambition, the young Senator volunteered to introduce a resolution that he be recompensed by the Government.

With this promise, he gave back hope for the blond god to live by, and with his wife, created, never to be broken, a psychic bond of understanding of her husband's character. They both loved his spontaneity, succumbed to his unconscious, flexible golden charm, and felt the responsibility of regulating his life-work would extend a lifetime, for he labored in spurts, went, willy-nilly, with the strongest wind, and achieved, even under duress, only infantile resolution. Drink stultified his will, swelled self-pity and blew too sodden a wind into a permissible travel braggadocio. He was a mercurial mate, incapable of being categorized as a drunkard because he was of too good stock, fundamentally, or as undesirable because of his infinite masculine attraction in sobriety. Anger, actuated by love, only made him wallow in remorse. In such a state, he lost attraction for the domineering Peg. He was a problem. But he didn't seem to perplex Eaton. Tacitly, with no word spoken, Peg gave her husband's guidance to a mature mentor of his own age.

Eaton was then playing mentor to one, almost twice his age, whom he loved as father and friend. Andrew Jackson, in his own words to President Monroe, having invaded Florida, then Spanish territory, to "chastise the ruthless savages who have been depredating on the lives and property of our citizens" and believing that it would "meet not only with the approbation of your country but the approbation of Heaven," had brought down the hell-fire of Congress on his head. Not because he quelled the outlawry of the Seminoles who were spurred on by two Englishmen, Arbuthnot and Ambrister, was he being bitterly censured, but because he had

wrested the province from Spanish control and had the two Englishmen court-martialed and executed. This direct action was a warning to England not to use Florida as a base for military operations against the United States; to Spain that her hold over the territory was nil and she had better sell what she could not hold; and to the Indians to cease inhuman attacks. In its triple effectiveness, it had the whole country's endorsement.

Eaton knew the citizenry was relieved that the Union now controlled the entire Eastern seaboard, even though the American Ambassador in London wrote that "if the Ministry had held up a finger," there might have been war to avenge the two Englishmen's deaths. Accordingly, he advised Jackson not to come to Washington. He didn't want him to hear the official opprobrium being cast on his conduct. The General was hot-headed, and would become passionately impatient of phrases condemning an action ordered by the government and acceptable to the country. Nevertheless, upon more alarmed advice, Jackson arrived in the Capital toward the end of January, 1819. Fortunately, he came after some of the bitterest accusations, though the situation was still "acute." Eaton, temperately, dispassionately, tried to tone down the extremely antagonistic speech made by Henry Clay, Speaker of the House who feared the General's popularity and native power. Though often visiting O'Neale's with Eaton, Jackson refused all invitations and awaited the decision. On February 8th, he was acquitted by the House.

Immediately, he set out for the North where he was feted. But an investigation into his conduct in the Senate, independent of the other, was being made. It was not until March 1st, six days after the *National Intelligencer* printed the Senate's censure of Florida's invasion, that Jackson saw it. In eight hours he was in Washington, in a "great rage." The printed report had been unconstitutional, the Senate agreed, the same day that newspapers carried notice that the treaty of purchase with Spain had been signed and Florida

was ours, legally. Jackson, partially satisfied, left for home the next morning.

William O'Neale was excited by the proceedings, and, for one, didn't think the General was blustering a bit too much when rumor said he swore "he'd cut off the ears of any members of the committee who opposed him." Mrs. Timberlake took a lively interest, too, and listened attentively to Senator Eaton's discussions in the tavern. Not many years were to pass before Peggy overheard Jackson boasting, in his provincial patriotism, that he'd never set foot on foreign territory.

"What about Florida, General?" she was to put in mildly, creating panic in the White House East Room.

"Oh, that's so, Florida was foreign," Jackson replied, mortified.

"I guess you forgot that when you *went* there, General," Peggy added, deepening consternation. Then quickly, she concluded: "Never mind, General, it didn't *stay* foreign long after *you got there*."

Jackson for many years repeated the anecdote with the comment that Peggy was the "smartest little woman in America, Sir! Smartest little woman in America."

Jackson was soon followed to Tennessee by Eaton, who was still absorbed in political observations of his first term, and indelibly impressed by his colleagues' overreaching Presidential ambitions.

In Washington, which, as Washington Irving said, was desolate after the "casual population" rolled away on heavy stage-coach wheels, the Timberlakes were apparently happy. Peg yielded to Timberlake's intoxication at his prospects of reimbursement through Senator Eaton's aid. By the time Eaton returned for fall session, Peg, light-hearted again, was heavy with child.

Timberlake, in Peg's words, had found a "warm, personal friend" in Eaton. True to his word, Eaton formulated a petition

and presented it in March 1820, shortly after he had satisfied Jackson in presenting his answer to the Senate's Seminole War investigation. His memorial, the fiery General said, "was drew with Christian mildness." Eaton, after tempering it to a more conciliatory tone and effecting its presentation by Rufus King, wrote "rosy accounts" of its reception to the old Hero. Unfortunately, he couldn't profess such sanguine results for Timberlake.

His petition, which pleaded reimbursement for losses and restitution to a purser's post, had an adverse report before the next month had passed. Senator James Pleasants, of Virginia, heading the committee on Naval Affairs, while admitting that exigencies of war cause unavoidable private losses, was of the opinion that "no relief ought to be granted" at least on two grounds. In the first place, a purser put private stores on board to sell sailors at private risk. Did he expect the Government "to become insurer"? Why didn't he take the precaution of insuring his goods himself? He could then claim loss "justifiably." Insurance rates were too high to cover profit in this particular case? Absurd answer! As if the high rate of insurance changes "the principle which ought to govern" such cases! Pursers made a "limited but liberal profit," for which reason the office was "eagerly sought after." And where was a precedent to guide their generosity?

Furthermore, though his books were taken by the British, precluding satisfactory settlement with sailors, "there can hardly be a doubt but that copies . . . might have been obtained." War is ruthless to private property for public gain but a man should not neglect to obtain copies from the enemy where necessary. . . . Thus did the judicial committee disparage an American officer innocent in his irresponsibility. The Senate agreed in a hostile motion which gave instantaneous death to two-thirds of his claim for recovery.

The surviving plea the committee had found "reasonable," perhaps because it pertained to "public opinion." When citizens choose to toast victors of maritime adventure and "officers assent to all seamen going ashore agreeably to invitation," the loss should be re-

trieved. "Permitting a whole crew to go ashore was a departure from the usual custom" and "the large desertion is undoubtedly" due to this cause. This time they found a precedent, or a pretext, in the "state of public feeling." They reported a "Bill to afford the relief sought" on this last ground.

Despite three readings undoubtedly stimulated through Eaton's interest in him, the Bill for his relief did not pass. Still, all was not hopeless. Senator Eaton obtained permission for Purser Timberlake to withdraw his papers, the day before Congress adjourned that spring. During the summer, he would see if he couldn't consider another method of presentation. Timberlake, temperamentally unstable, once again was touched with despondency; once again buried his shortcomings in brewage.

Peggy's baby girl was born that spring's end. They called her Virginia, after the state which nurtured the Scotch-Timberlakes. It was with Senator Barbour, of Virginia, that Eaton arranged to have Timberlake's appeal presented again in the fall season. Peg was grateful for the way in which Eaton nurtured her husband's hopes. He, too, then saw to what pits of melancholy Timberlake could descend, how deep went his dejection, how wanton was his dissipation, despite the arrival of his longed-for daughter who was more beautiful even than the boy had been.

The summer passed in the new warmth of their double adoration for her, but Peg was secretly restive. Timberlake's prospects to pursue his chosen profession were brighter, it is true, through Senator Eaton's aid and intervention, but, after all, he could only introduce, not influence. Suppose the Senate, impersonally, continued implacably indifferent to the losses of an American citizen in the late War? There would always be Dad, of course, but he didn't go to Congress quite so much now. He must be having trouble of which he would not tell her. If only Timberlake could let his losses go, stay on land without pining for the sea, and concentrate on his business, all might be well. But if it were not . . . if it were not . . . slowly Peggy's independence, crushed under the anxious interdepend-

ence of her voluntary marriage, was reborn. When men now looked at her with doubly desirous eyes, hers sparkled coquettish answer. Timberlake was no longer the sole object of her devoted attention.

Between them there grew a barrier. Timberlake saw that she no longer respected him. When he had occasion to consult the family physician, Dr. Craven, he told him he was sick of the sight of land and "must go off to sea." Furthermore, his wife was now indifferent to him, and there were plenty of men at the tavern to keep her interested. The Franklin House, grown both in importance and size since O'Neale advertised it as "that extensive establishment," was now the foremost hotel in the city. The Spanish Minister, Don Alphonso Dionisio Vives, sent to conclude the Florida treaty, made his home there, as did diplomats from Prussia and Portugal, sundry Congressmen and travelers. It was a quickening pageant for a flirtatious woman in search of distraction from a marital worry, and from it she chose at will what she wanted of high-spirited conversation, charm and company. She said things women did not dare utter aloud, honest thoughts, original only in so far as they were outspoken, outrageous only to women who blushed to mention their true natures.

She was twenty, with her second child, and wore the bloom of young French matrons liberated by marriage, so in contrast to the American mode of yoke and lockstep, helpmate and burdened mother, through which women were usually old at twenty-five. She had been born to politics, bred with them, and could talk with understanding on Missouri's admission as a State with or without the involved slavery question and whether the national government had authority to appropriate money for internal improvements. Peg was particularly sympathetic with Senator Eaton's motion restricting the importation of slaves.

In participating in political discussion, she was true to her own vitality, for since childhood her ears had been exposed to it, her perception keen, her eye alight and her tongue sharp. She had a picturesque gift of expression, a derisive eye which caught quickly others'

absurdities, and she knew how to make the most of a conversational *contretemps*.

To Timberlake she was true insofar as her nature allowed her to be. There was more vivacity in Peggy O'Neale than Timberlake knew how to stimulate, or once stimulated by others, to curb. He who had been an extravagant lover was now a dissolute husband, a wastrel more from weakness than wish. It was inevitable that the weak, handsome Timberlake would lose his hold over the strong, beautiful person that was Peggy O'Neale.

When Eaton returned to the Franklin House that fall, he found Timberlake depressed, and Peg curiously compelling. She seemed younger, more challenging. Some secret care seemed to have been lifted from her shoulders. She was genuinely gay, daring, delightful in a new mature sense. Though he had always admired her wit, wished that he might help her in any way he could, she was his friend's wife. And then, he was a widower.

The session was barely launched before Timberlake's case was re-introduced by Senator Barbour. Immediately, it was referred to the Committee on Claims, which in turn referred it to the Committee of Naval Affairs. On February 28th, this committee discharged the petition entirely, disclaiming that it could do anything. Timberlake's spirits sunk. His melancholy dampened whatever buoyancy remained in their domesticity, for Peg saw that his only hope of salvation lay in sailing the sea again.

Eaton saw it, too, for he tried to tone up the sailor's salt by applying personally to the Secretary of the Navy for him. Privately, he pitied Peg. Her vivacity was withered by the winds of worry. She was such a glorious creature, in so many ways, it was a shame. If he were her husband, he'd never leave her—sea or no sea. He suggested as much to Timberlake, pleading with him to buttress his position *to* earth instead of *over* the earth. Though Timberlake admitted that his way of life was unfair to his wife and went off, young Senator Eaton had a way of making a purely tentative suggestion sound so sane that it usually was adopted as deliberative

decision. He was to be named the first and shrewdest of the Democratic "wire-pullers," because he treated all men like men and none as dignitaries. Then, too, he was disdainful of ceremony. His term was expiring with the close of Congress, and he watched Inauguration with a scornful eye. "I have been to the Coronation today," he wrote Rufus King. Of all the collections he'd ever seen, "it was a match for any." After an hour's pressure through an immense crowd, he had "the good, or bad fortune to gain admittance"—to the Hall of Representatives, no less, wrote the youthful Senator in derision. He was too late for the ceremony, but saw President Monroe deliver "to the good people in waiting a speech." But he only saw and did not hear, so he couldn't inform King of its contents, but consoled his recipient that "to-morrow's *Intelligencer* will." On the whole, he concluded, "I was happier to get out than I was to get in." Another Senator living at the Franklin House added a post-script which read "I was wiser than Eaton; I staid at home." Eaton marked an X after the "wiser" and appended "*dubitor.*"

There was an unknown quality about the Franklin House of which Eaton was none the wiser and which Peg might have marked dubious. The night before he left for Norfolk, he asked Mrs. O'Neale and Mrs. Timberlake to go for a drive, thus paying his respects to the women of the household who had made his Washington home pleasurable. Whether he returned to the Capital in the fall depended on his election. If he didn't come back—well, private life was pleasant. Interrupting his comment, there came a sudden jolt of the carriage, forcing upon all the fact that life might soon be lost to them.

"The horse took fright, and ran away, upset the carriage and threw us all out," Peg later said.

They were in front of Kalorama, the superb country seat of Commodore Decatur. Eaton helped Mrs. O'Neale to her feet. That hardy matron had hardly a scratch. Peg, however, couldn't rise at all. Eaton bent and lifted her. At her touch, it was he who became uplifted.

"When I got home I found myself badly bruised, was put to bed and Dr. Craven sent for," told Peggy at a later day.

Had she had any idea of the interpretation this accident would subsequently receive, she would have chosen a less speculative and less garrulous physician.

Eaton had left Washington for good, perhaps, when his importunities to the Navy Department for Timberlake bore fruit. The latter was appointed Purser on the U. S. S. "Shark" and saw no shoals ahead. Jubilant, Purser Timberlake awaited reunion with his first love, the sea. She would cradle him in her billowy arms, give him the healing savour of sunbeam and starlight on blanket of brine. He could exult as the prow of his ship ploughed the deep, and come back to his Peg enriched in worth, wealth and health, and show himself to be the man of mastery she thought him five years ago this autumn.

He had hardly gone before his mastery became manifest to Peg. Worried about the wisdom of bringing another being into the world which her husband adorned but hardly conquered, she went to her mother for advice. With maternal solicitude, Mrs. O'Neale advocated premature *accouchment*, and told a few of her intimate friends of her daughter's dilemma and their decision. The women then were kind, in the fashion of womankind, but the women who were later to refashion the incident as proof of adultery were foul. Perhaps had Peg foreseen the implications to be given by filthy-minded females who regularly bore a baby each year, she might have changed her mind on this strictly personal problem. Peggy was always courageous, foolhardy sometimes. Her conviction that it was kinder to spare a child the hazards of a home dependent on a sea-faring father, was a century premature, as was her political interest. Plainly her attitude toward this affair—that it was no one's business but her own—in a time when birth-control was bellicosely frowned upon was an unpardonable error in an even younger democracy.

3.

They had touched each other and the tingle did not subside on either side. The summer was an interminable interim of expectancy. Would Eaton really return? Peg was twenty-two, maturing in her desire for more complete a mate than her chameleon sailor-lad who would never grow up. Her father's instinct had been right. She should have waited for a lawmaker since her interests were theirs and her conversation stimulating to them.

Eaton, who had married Myra Lewis, one of Jackson's wards, and given her to an early grave, too had been mis-mated. He had made the mistake of taking an unworldly woman who couldn't comprehend the subtleties of his character. Their marriage had been one of more familiarity than felicity. Here was a woman of exquisite beauty and excellent brain, swift to sense unspoken thoughts, amusingly alert to articulate ones. Clearly, she was fashioned in his pattern, differing only in her recklessness to his rectitude because she had more to give. Peggy Timberlake, for the first time, trembled that a man she admired might fear to have her heart. But she couldn't help giving it, whether he took it or forsook it.

The next session of the Senate saw Eaton in his seat. He had been elected, and elected to return despite danger signals that lay deep in his blood. Timberlake was finally at sea, having left on the "Shark" in February, soon after Congress convened. They were all too soon to say that Eaton had played the shark in sending the husband off so that he could enjoy, unimpeded, his wife's company.

It was not long before Eaton and Peg became victims of gossip in the Capital. In her husband's absence, he took her driving, to parties and to balls. Best of all, they both liked the walks in the woods where renascent spring convinced their all too credulous senses of supernal marvels. It was the return of spring for them, for the two now saw the season with the eager eyes of a new love, unuttered but acknowledged by double signs.

Peg, indiscreet in her impetuosity, sometimes "sat out on the porch under the stars" after Franklin House full dinners, and talked to Eaton, even after the other guests had taken their candles and retired. The *mores* of the day dictated that women, once married, were banished from the world for domesticity. When they re-entered its sphere, it must always be at the side of the husband. Peg was one of those women who deserve a place in the contemporary world without the buttress of husband's position. She had no domestic duties and held her child in better hands with her mother, now called by Daniel Webster the "most beautiful and well-preserved woman of her age he'd ever seen." She had a "grave sedate face" with quiet brow and mouth "indicative of more repose and poise than was possessed by her brilliant daughter." A fairly free agent in material matters, now with her husband's difficulties partially adjusted, Peg, unfortunately, was an utterly natural person, free from conventionality and cant.

It is her enemies who left elaborate written accounts of her transgressions, and even then, praise her in attempts to damn her. Governor Floyd, for one, writes that "she was impudent, or rather, had as much assurance as her father but she was the wife of a naval officer. She was admitted into good society but about the year 1821, Mrs. Monroe, the wife of the then President, sent her a message desiring her not to come to their drawing-rooms. This was done, as was supposed, from the report of Mrs. Timberlake's *amour* with Eaton having got to the ears of Mrs. Monroe. Whether so or not none can tell, but this I know, that Eaton's connection with Mrs. Timberlake was as notorious at that day as any part of the day . . . Whilst I was in Congress, she was considered as a lady who would be willing to dispense her favors wherever she took a fancy."

Censured because her strong, undisciplined nature responded to disciplined male strength while she hoped against hope for the redemption of her first husband, weak to the core, Peg could afford to wait. One President's wife had flattered her with first choice in a contest of charm. Now, another insulted her for choosing the com-

panionship of her husband's best friend. Very, very soon, ladies received without question at White House levees were to speak in bated breath of Peg as the "new First Lady," and it was to be Eaton's best friend with whom they coupled her name.

Her husband was still on cruise with the "Shark" when the new session began. Eaton returned earlier than usual, confiding to Jackson that he found other ways of using his time than in visiting "grand ones" because "in a place where all things are brought to standard value" he did not know "if strict rule would sanction a friendly visit until the doors of Congress" were formally opened. Nevertheless, he seemed to know the news. "Today, we shall amidst a fast falling shower of snow, receive the Message, our text book for the winter. It will apprise us, we are told, that the state of the Treasury is full and flush; which, if true, will be very bad news to the radicals; . . . the whole ground out of which to raise piteous lamentations before the nation will at a most desirable moment be quite taken away."

One radical gentleman in Washington who might have made piteous lamentation because of financial difficulties and did not was William O'Neale. With that easy good nature with which he mingled with all men, he had endorsed a large note for another and been held responsible. In consequence, his hotel was seized. "I shall expose to public sale," read the Marshall's notice, ". . . Franklin Inn, occupied by Mr. William O'Neale . . . a most complete establishment . . . also household furniture of said O'Neale."

Mr. O'Neale couldn't allow this advertisement to go to the public unaccompanied by an explanation. Directly below appeared: "To my friends: My own feelings prompt me to say that the above is not for any debt contracted by me . . . it was a misjudged confidence in others which led me to endorse for them, and which has left me liable for payment of about \$10,000 to \$12,000. I have ever made out to discharge my own debts, but a confidence, indiscreetly placed in others, has involved me in difficulties and perhaps ruin."

It was a severe penalty to pay for indiscriminate trust. O'Neale moved pleadingly among his friends in an attempt to avoid this removal of the roof from over his head. But all failed him, that is all except the gentleman who had been indiscreet enough to accept his daughter's confidences, who had, perhaps, ruined her reputation by his own unveiled attentions. Eaton bought the property when O'Neale, all else having failed him, appealed to him. This material expenditure soon confirmed the opprobrious opinion of the dashing Mrs. Timberlake. Eaton was not only saviour but son-in-law without the law, buying the hotel for his own convenience, not to help a family which had been kind to him, the tittle-tattle of the taverns had it. . . . That he had sold it to John Gadsby, well-known hotel-keeper from Baltimore, and that the latter was now managing Franklin House, and not Mr. O'Neale, was of little account.

From the wreckage, Eaton helped O'Neale save enough to open a small boarding house, such as that with which he started. Timberlake returned from his cruise that summer, and saw that he would now have to provide a home for his wife and child. Peg was upset by her father's reversal in fortune, but it was more a matter of pride than personal loss. Andrew Jackson had been drafted as a Senator at the last moment when his friends needed to defeat an anti-Jackson movement in Tennessee. Eaton and Jackson, being bosom friends, would probably lodge together. But would they come back to O'Neale's in preference to the Franklin House? After all, Jackson was a national personage, his name being brought into the Presidential race not by politicians but by popular acclaim.

But Jackson came there. He wrote his wife, whom he had rescued from an unfortunate marriage with a Mr. Robards, without, however, having taken the trouble to find out whether the rumored divorce was authentic or not, that he had "taken lodgings at Mr. O'Neals. Major Eaton and Call make my mess; we are private and comfortably accommodated in a worthy family. . . . Before I leave this I shall engage rooms for your reception next fall."

A few days later, Jackson wrote her again that "the kind attention of my friend Eaton has been great, and to him I feel truly indebted for the comfortable quarters we now occupy. We are in the family of Mr. O'Neale whose amiable pious wife and two daughters, one married and the other single, take every pains in their power to make us comfortable and agreeable, Mr. O'Neale himself is an agreeable man. This family has been wealthy but by misfortune and endorsement for others, has been reduced to the necessity of keeping a boarding house. I can with truth say I never was in a more agreeable and worthy family. When we have a leisure hour in the evening, we spend it with the family. Mrs. Timberlake, the married daughter whose husband belongs to our Navy, plays on the Piano delightfully, and every Sunday evening entertains her pious mother with sacred music, to which we are invited, and the single daughter, who is also pious and sings well unites in the music. I am thus particular in giving you a narrative of our situation with which I know you will be pleased.

"Every Sunday we spend at church. This family belongs to the methodist society. . . . The President is very kind to me; indeed amidst the intrigue for the next presidency here, I get on pretty well, as I touch not, handle not of the unclean procedure: I keep myself entirely aloof from the intriguers, and caucus mongers, with a determination that if I am brought into that office it shall be by the free and unsolicited voice of the people. . . . Major Davenport is now with us with his young and amiable wife that he has lately married in Philadelphia. He has given this family your character, and Mrs. Timberlake (from what she has heard of you from Major Eaton and Major Davenport) has requested me to present you with her respects. When you come here I am convinced you will be much pleased with this family."

Jackson was long to be grateful for the good attentions the O'Neales gave him during his first winter in Washington, saying over and over "Eaton and the family we live in are truly kind and attentive to me; when the most indisposed, I find in them, and

Genl. Call what I may call, most truly friends." Jackson was impressed by the O'Neales and found Peggy enchanting. Eaton was "more than a son."

In truth, Eaton was doing a son's duty. Aside from arduous letter-writing for Jackson, he endeared himself ineffaceably in a very delicate matter. Already, opposition political camps were abusing Jackson as an adulterer. It was scurrilously whispered that Jackson had married Rachel Donelson Robards when she was still the wife of another man, that her husband had had good cause for jealousy. They didn't tell that when Jackson met her at her mother's house, where he was a boarder, he was attracted and attentive to her in a dignified, deferential way, and that their marriage came after they heard Robards had applied to the legislature for a divorce. Unfortunately, after several years, they discovered that the divorce had only been applied for but not granted. Thus, technically, they had lived "in sin." That they re-married to satisfy convention did not count—with the conventional.

Eaton, who motivated so much of what appeared from Jackson politically, was vigilant in gathering testimony to refute the slanders. He wrote Judge John Overton, a mutual Tennessee friend, for "information of the circumstances of General Jackson's marriage. . . delicate as it may be to go into a man's family concerns, necessity demands that we should have the facts, that we may act defensively." He didn't know much about it "but always understood that there was no criminal imputation . . . that Mrs. Jackson lived dissatisfied under her first marriage, and married again after being legally divorced. The story is that he violently drove the man away, etc. write me about it, and speedily—I do not think but that he will be elected."

Jackson was to pay him in like coin, act the friend as foe of a similar slander sometime later.

Another who was grateful for Eaton's activities in his behalf was Timberlake. He had interceded with the Secretary of the Navy

for him again, this time for the pursership of the U. S. S. "Constitution," pledging his personal bond for \$10,000. Timberlake's accounts were still in troublous state, though he was trying his best to settle those of the "Shark's" voyage.

Jackson, who had an "old-fashioned chivalry," even for his day, thought Eaton extremely attentive and kind to Mrs. Timberlake, solicitous for the social happiness of a brother officer's wife, just as his Tennessee friends were kind to his Rachel. Peg's sprightliness at meals, for she sat at table with them, was inspiring to the "gloom of his spirits," and at her quips he often quelled riotous laughter. She was not only agreeable but had an aggressive energy that made her kin to the General. He was her friend.

Jackson, unaccustomed to anything in her composure but merriment, found her once flashing fire and flint—bristling brimstone. Happening into a room, he saw Peggy "much agitated and overwhelmed in tears." There was a pair of tongs in her loose grasp, and a look of violent vindictiveness on her face.

She had been "grossly insulted," she complained with "much feeling and bitterness." General Richard K. Call, of Florida, who made up the mess with Jackson and Eaton, had apparently tried to take her in his arms, and urge her to more affectionate abandon. With his great strength, he had almost forced her to a settee near the fire, when she grasped the fire-shovel in one hand, the tongs in the other, and literally belaboured him from the room. As she told the story, her indignation mounted. Jackson tried to calm her, promising to take Call to task, just as though he were her father. At this, she agreed to be silent, but she swore that she would never again talk to the gentleman who thought her a woman of "call."

When Jackson cornered Call, and put him on the carpet for his assault, he admitted it, but confessed he had thought her "a woman of easy virtue and familiar with others," naming Eaton. Her resistance, he salved his vanity, was "merely from *mock modesty*." Jackson was insistent on stressing Peggy's point of view. Did Call have any "positive evidence of his own" to warrant such

a belief? No? Well, then, he need only refer him "to the rebuff he met with" to change his opinion. He hoped that sober reflections would "guard him from like improper conduct."

Peggy never again ate at their table while Call remained a guest at the Franklin House.

Call, even after Jackson's lecture, did not confine his belief to himself. Compensating his own lack of success with her, he sent word to Major William B. Lewis, Eaton's brother-in-law, that the Senator's conduct with Mrs. Timberlake was the talk of the town, and told fellow members of Congress, who perhaps didn't need the information, that Peggy was pretty lively.

Lewis, alarmed, wrote Eaton a letter, pleading for his early return to Nashville, but neglected to send it when he heard from his friend and neighbor, Jackson, that both were bound for the West at the close of the session soon. Jackson, having heard Call associate immorally Peg's and Eaton's names, received with premonition news that Timberlake was leaving Washington in June. But Eaton would be in Tennessee by then.

However, when plans for their early departure were mentioned in the O'Neale parlor, Peg paled. Later in the day, colleagues saw a messenger bring into the Senate Chamber a pink envelope. Eaton read its contents and left the hall hurriedly. At dinner, Peg's eyes were rimmed with red, and Eaton was visibly perturbed. Before the evening passed, senior Senator Eaton informed junior Senator Jackson that he would not accompany him, as planned, to Tennessee.

Jackson was sorry but understood. At the same time, he was writing his wife how his heart "bleeds when I read the pain that our separation has cost you. I hope in God when we meet we will never be separated again until death parts us. I pray you my Love to keep up your spirits; I will be with you as soon as I possibly can. Your anxiety to see me cannot surpass mine to be with you."

When he returned, alone, to Nashville, Major Lewis probed him on the rumors Call circulated about Mrs. Timberlake and

Eaton. Jackson said he "had never seen or heard aught against the chastity of Mrs. Timberlake that was calculated to raise even a suspicion of her virtue in the mind of any one who was not under the influence of *deep prejudice or prone to jealousy*."

Jackson, who believed or disbelieved only upon passionate conviction, this early formed a deep prejudice in favor of Peggy O'Neale and made his first defense of her.

4.

The Timberlakes faced a long separation. They had been married for eight years and he was now to be gone for four. Peg and Virginia could remain with O'Neales during this voyage but when he returned he wanted a home of their own. It was a sound instinct which led him to seek shelter away from the fascination of her father's house, but he was mistaken in believing that he could so shield Peg from society more stimulating than his own.

The only person whose constant company he conceded her was his "good friend, Eaton," who shared so sympathetically the tribulations of the O'Neales and who invested so much energy in his own naval worries. And didn't Eaton dote on Virginia, as though she were his own daughter? Hadn't he heard Eaton say that without children, "man . . . is little else than a blank, disregarded greatly by himself, and claiming . . . but half the respect he otherwise would be entitled to receive"? Although his own case, and "greatly to be deplored," the young Senator thought it "perhaps too late to seek an alteration, for as the Spanish proverb has it, late marriages make early orphans."

Entrusting his little family to Eaton, Timberlake bade them all an "affectionate farewell." He left for New York on the steamboat via Baltimore. A few hours later the Secretary of the Navy ordered him not to proceed until his "Shark's" accounts were given final approval by the Department. Eaton took the next stage straight to Philadelphia, and met Timberlake when he arrived on the steamboat. Somewhat impatient with the spendthrift sailor who suffered

himself to live under a constant cloud without conscious effort to clarify his position, Eaton spoke both sincerely and severely on the necessity of concluding this protracted business of accounts. Timberlake quailed. Perhaps this lecture was a preparatory pill. Was his pursership revoked by the Department? He thought his "Shark's" accounts balanced. There was only one thing to do. He would have to return to Washington to see the Secretary himself. Eaton remained in Philadelphia. Timberlake took the next boat back to Baltimore. On board, he wrote Eaton expressing doubt that he would ever be given a chance to sail again, now. He had so slight a hold on hope.

Eaton kindly but crisply replied regretting that anything he'd said had "excited fears" for his prospects on the "Constitution." His only object, he claimed, "was to impress upon you the necessity of dispatch in your business." When this is accomplished, he advised, "you can divide your time in the way most suitable to yourself, and remain or depart from Washington as may be found necessary to your interest and feeling."

While in the Capital, he might see his friend Commodore Rodgers about the pursership of the "North Carolina," too. "I would by no means, though, hazard the place you have; grasp not at the shadow and lose the substance; merely whisper it, and indirectly, too; . . . either situation is a good one." Whichever eventuated, he should "enter with a determination to practice all that caution and economy which would enable you at the end of your term, to betake yourself to shore, and there seek to make what may be necessary to a decent support. Beyond this," he philosophized, "all is folly and nonsense. With my wife and children, if so blest, I would rather live on a comfortable subsistence, than to have millions and be absent from them." Present me, he said in the next sentence, "to Mr. and Mrs. O'Neale, and to Margaret and Mary, I hope you found them all well."

Peg was well enough, though Eaton's shadow was more substantial than her husband's substance. The Senator really sustained

him, and without his bolstering influence, Timberlake's personality now lacked force and function. Warily, he had to woo her all over again. It was evident to his second-sight that Peg was not the same vessel into which he had poured, care-free, his first enthusiasm. She seemed taut, stretched on the rack of a secret torture. It would perhaps be best to take Eaton's advice and settle down after this profitable four-year cruise. With Mr. O'Neale, he chose the site of the home to be built in his absence. It would be better for Peg to have a place of her own, and for Virginia to know home life instead of the exciting one of a large hotel. Virginia, the O'Neales saw, had Peg's sprightliness, and her temper. Mr. O'Neale nicknamed her "gorgeous Ginger," which stuck to her long after she annexed a more stately title.

Timberlake took a serious view of his responsibilities now. Eaton was having his effect, Peg saw, not on her alone but also on her husband. When Timberlake talked to the architect about plans for the house, it was with some of his old insouciant attraction. There was nothing seriously objectionable about Timberlake as a husband, now that he assumed his responsibilities and drank less. That is, nothing except that she had outgrown him.

She bid her husband good-bye in the presence of General Jackson, whom he hoped to see President on his return. In the early autumn, before Eaton returned for Congress, Timberlake left "the city of magnificent distances," in the Portuguese Minister's *bon mot*, for that magnificent distance so dear to his temperament.

In his absence, as usual, there was much to keep Peg alert and amused. Eaton and Jackson returned, accompanied by Mrs. Jackson. The General had brought his wife to Congress with him both because he couldn't face another winter spent without her, and because Eaton thought her presence and piety would refute the politico-social world's mistaken estimates of her worth as his partner.

She was plain, homely almost, but a woman of fine vitality and energy. Undoubtedly those qualities endeared her to Mrs. O'Neale,

whose intimate she became. She liked Peggy, too, and agreed with the General that Mrs. Timberlake was a handsome and high-spirited woman maligned by gossip. The rounds of entertainment in Washington left her critical and contemptuous, however. She was born for the farm, not the fan. If Jackson were elected, of course she'd come, but she preferred the peace of the Hermitage.

The ladies of Washington handled her reputation freely. Wasn't she reputed to smoke a pipe? And plainly, she was *gauche* in the drawing room, even though good-natured. How could Jackson dream of running for the Presidency, for which he was gaining ground daily, with such a wife? Could it be possible that his idea of national dignity permitted a woman of his Rachel's backwoods personality to hold the position of First Lady? Mrs. O'Neale thought Mrs. Jackson could easily measure up with just a few pointers on official procedure, and she said so. Jackson, to his dying day, venerated her for her honest feeling for his wife. Peggy was more interested in the General's personality, but that was natural. All her life, she mixed with men, and measured herself to their stature. Women, no matter how kind-hearted, had little attraction for her, beyond a perfunctory acquaintance. Peggy described Mrs. Jackson as a "large, portly woman with a sweet benevolent face, who always insisted on having prayers."

The hotel that season became the center of gaiety and official celebration. Lafayette, as the nation's guest, was housed there. Congress chose the Franklin House for his headquarters because it was the best and biggest hotel in the city, able to meet banquet requirements for all officialdom.

Peggy took part in all the great dinners given in honor of the venerable and now-needy humanitarian. America wished to show off her prosperity and her pleasure at the visit of so old a friend to the Republic. O'Neale was ordered to buy the best of silver to serve him. As a relic of the great Frenchman's visit to his House, he gave Peg as her personal property the sumptuous silver set with which Lafayette had been served officially. Now, if her friend

Jackson became President, she could entertain him in her new home without hesitation, O'Neale beamed.

Lafayette went back to France financially free and Jackson lost the Presidency, even though he had the largest electoral vote. The election was thrown into the House of Representatives where Henry Clay as Speaker had most influence. Crawford was a sick man, so the choice lay between John Quincy Adams and Jackson. Clay threw his controlled block of votes to the former, whom he might rightly have considered the more polished and cultivated statesman, trained from birth to public life. But his preference appeared too patent to Jackson's followers when Clay became President Adams' Secretary of State.

A great cry of "bargain and corruption" arose. Eaton, who was charged with bringing the accusation through Kremer, of Pennsylvania, tried tactfully to restrain Jackson's quite natural resentment at Clay's political expediency. But he could not prevent Jackson from becoming Clay's life-long enemy, nor could he dissuade the General that Adams had not been a participant in the unsavory scandals against Rachel, though Adams always bitterly denied it. However, with ammunition in reserve, Jackson wrote a friend who gave warning of current adulterous accounts of his marriage that he knew how to defend his wife as he had done the rights of his country, but he would restrain himself until "Justice required atonement for the invaders of Female Character." His retaliation came when he violently defended Peggy from the same critics who attacked Mrs. Jackson.

In order to defend his prospects in the succeeding Presidential campaign in dignified silence, which Eaton constantly recommended, Jackson resigned as Senator, at the end of that session, but never resigned himself to the calumny cast on his wife's character. The next year clamor about his Rachel reached such indecent proportions in opposition presses that he needed a "literary bureau," consisting of Eaton, Sam Houston and Judge Jacob C. Isacks, to

answer the debased deluge on his placid domesticity. When, later, Peggy suffered the same crucifixion, he knew her pain.

Amid this national excitement of corruption, political and personal, Peg's second daughter was born. As agreed with Timberlake, she was called Margaret, Peg's namesake. The second maternity seemed to seal an old wound, and her new home, recently completed, did give her more privacy. Mr. O'Neale wrote Timberlake that the house, an eight-room residence, was "well enclosed by a good board fence six feet high . . . and shrubbery all put in the handsomest style." The front parlor contained a "handsome marble mantelpiece and marble hearth." Everything, inside and out, O'Neale boasted, was "done in the best manner." Its cost, he advised, "would be \$750 or \$200 more than the funds in hand and expected. This will be a pleasant place" for Peg, he ended.

It must have been pleasant to Senator Eaton, too, for he wrote Timberlake at almost the same time what a joy it was to watch "your little girl, whom you never saw, prancing alone through the whole house." Evidently he soldered his own parental void in lavishing love on Timberlake's little girls. A Senator was spoiling Peggy's children just as she'd been spoiled. Margaret is a "charming little thing, . . . and will be a great comfort to you" on your return, he wrote. "This pilgrimage over, you will have no difficulty, I presume, in obtaining some advantageous situation in a Navy Yard." Even if his profits were not so great, "the deficiency will be made up in delight" in his family. "How a sailor, after ploughing the ocean so long," he pondered, "will be able to content himself on ~~this~~ is rather a perplexing inquiry."

~~Early~~ soon, Eaton was entangled in financial difficulties. He ~~needed~~ cash to carry over the Franklin House property, for "Gadsby got on badly." With "no bad luck," he should secure about \$20,000 as residue from the estate for O'Neale, but could never give it to him "because of other debts against him." Inasmuch as the next year

was probably the last of his coming to Congress, "if practicable, it might be well to close this business." If Timberlake could, "without injury" to his affairs, "advance about \$7,000 it might be effected." By no means attempt it if "you have not a fund entirely disposable from your other business." Peg had "suggested the idea of writing you . . . but I declined, telling her that I knew you had not the funds to spare; of course, even she knows nothing about it." If Timberlake could spare the money, instead of spending it or investing in other ways, he thought it would be "necessary to arrange it in a way that none of the family shall know whence the funds came."

Timberlake, then in the Mediterranean squadron, sent \$2,491.75 and his power of attorney. Two thousand went into the property, Eaton wrote, thanking him for seeing his way clear to invest in his father-in-law's interest as well as his own. The odd amount went to pay bills on Peggy's home. The Franklin House property would be conveyed to the O'Neales "for life, and to their children thereafter, which was the design" with which he "originally embarked on this business." He had managed to save enough "while the old people live, to keep them comfortable. The remittance I have never mentioned to the family . . . for reasons not necessary to mention." He did tell Peg, though "under an injunction of secrecy" and only from an "apprehension that she might be hurt" by his managing it apart from her knowledge. "She was not only satisfied, but pleased. . . ."

In truth, Peg was pleased that Timberlake was at last showing results of Eaton's prudent tutelage, but dispirited that Eaton considered his political career nearing its close. Jackson, his friend, was on the ascendant, gaining vociferous votes for the Presidency from the masses which this time Congress could hardly deny. Eaton, a new type of politician from the old patrician school which disdained appeal to the masses except through personal integrity or eloquence, was instrumental in planting publicity in local political groups and in Washington. "Suave and stately," he moved through the country

winning votes for Jackson. It was he who "won Van Buren over to Jackson," and with him the "electoral vote of New York"; he "dethroned Crawford in Georgia," and "destructively undermined even Clay's supremacy in Kentucky." He was one of the first party bosses, intimating voter recompense. When there was a difficult party problem, Eaton untangled it, and let others act as spokesmen. He might have been "a much more imposing figure in history if he had not been fated to live and move in Jackson's portentous shadow." He knew, as did Major Lewis, how to manipulate the people so that they thought it for their own good. The old-style Federalists couldn't cope with such downright measures.

"The chiefs at Washington are not ignorant that their edifice of power is fast crumbling about them," he wrote a friend, "and that some extraordinary effort can alone sustain the fabrick from growing longer. . . . The prospects of Jackson's *certain* success are most flattering. . . . My own election *may* come this fall, my term expiring next March. I shall be opposed by a military chieftain (Carroll) and as it is a character of much force and hard to be resisted by one who cannot point to the graves of his slain, quite likely I may shortly *ascend* to the proud rank of a private citizen."

Eaton was in earnest. He was really indifferent about returning to office. When Peg saw that he told the truth, she faced facts. What would Washington be like without both Eaton, the man of her maturity, and Timberlake, the natural love of her youth? So convinced was she that Eaton was sufficiently self-sustaining to live apart from the political whirlpool that, in a rush of feeling for the man who needed her most, she sent word to Timberlake that she was joining him in Spain.

However, in the midst of her multiple preparations for foreign travel, Eaton, re-elected, returned to official life. Washington again had half the world for her. Timberlake would return to it, too. But he did not.

Shortly after the "Constitution" left Smyrna, Greece, bound for Port Mahon, Spain, its last stop before returning to America, the

Purser joined the large sick list aboard. On April second, when "moderate breezes from the westward and pleasant" blew, Sailor William F. Shields on watch wrote in the Log-book: "died at 2 A. M., departed this life, John B. Timberlake, Esquire, Purser." The surgeon's report was "pulmonary disease;" ship gossip had it debility from overdrink.

The temperature was at fifty-six degrees while the stars stood solemn watch over the cooling body of the over-buoyant, over-depressed man who "died with his wife's miniature in his hands."

At Port Mahon the next morning, cloudy and cold, they "disembarked the Marines, and sent all boats to attend the funeral of John B. Timberlake at noon. Interred the body at five p. m." After "erecting a handsome monument over his grave," shipmates went back to their boat for a meal made of two barrels of beef, twenty-five gallons of beans, one barrel of flour and five boxes of raisins, and an Acting Purser dispensed other dainties from Timberlake's store. The day he died the theatre in Washington offered "The Orphan Protected," and while he was buried they played "My Spouse and I."

The Navy Department messenger went with slow tread to give the news to Mrs. Timberlake. It was very late in the spring. Congress had already closed. On Pennsylvania Avenue near the Franklin House, he saw Senator Eaton, and knowing him an intimate friend of the O'Neales and Timberlake, did his distressing duty. Eaton was stunned, but summoning strength, re-traced his steps to O'Neale's. There sat Peggy playing with her two daughters.

"It was General Eaton who brought me the news of his death," she said, "and for two weeks I never left my room to see anyone."

While closeted with her conscience, Peggy refused all admittance to her room, even her family. For she had much to think on. Timberlake's last letter had been long—sixteen pages long. It bore the affectionate salutation of his pet name for her: "Bonnie Maggie Lauder." He enclosed money for passage, and with blithe accep-

tance took cognizance of her coming. Yet the end bore an inscription "*Noli me tangere*" (Touch me not). Now Peggy wondered whether he meant the money or his body.

While she reeled with realization that the golden creature who'd taken wing with ship-sails now reposed in rigid mass at another corner of the world, gossip got busy. He cut his throat, it said, when he heard of her infidelity with Eaton. While she struggled with the agony of self-accusation, Mrs. Grundy garrulously gave currency to the rumor that Timberlake had jumped overboard in despondency at double deceit.

Peg never whimpered as a child. She did not whine as a woman. Like her father, she swallowed punishment with a jibe, grief with a steel smile. So they said she was hard-hearted, destitute of real womanly feeling because she was not sentimental, didn't sputter her suffering sloppily about. Like a man, she took sorrow alone, in silence, and then emerged to the world new-armored. Washington society, which was vastly entertained that spring by Dr. Plantou's piquant recitation of a French fable of La Fontaine entitled "Differences of a Widow of a Day and That of a Year," saw only a brash widow in Peg.

With her father, she went to Boston, to collect the personal property which remained on board. Lt. Commander La Valette, who was with Timberlake when he died, returned the miniature clutched in her husband's cold hands. He told her "with the utmost sincerity," that he "very frequently heard Mr. Timberlake speak of his wife and children and always in the strongest terms of affection, and in no instance, even in his deranged moments, did he ever breathe a sentence to me of yourself and children but of strongest regard. He appeared to be at times much afflicted in mind, as in body. His mental affliction occasioned by some unsettled accounts and losses sustained in the capture of the Frigate President, as they were uppermost in his mind, in all his flighty moments." Another officer told her that a "more affectionate husband does not exist."

They didn't tell her that his accounts, as usual, were muddled, that he had left much money on board in iron casks, and that the Commander had had some difficulty with his successor which required a Court of Inquiry on board. If they had, she might have been prepared for another Court of Inquiry later.

"In his will, he left me all his property. His watch and ring he left to General Eaton," from whom officers told her he had received a letter at Smyrna and to whom he always referred as his "best friend."

That only made matters worse, gave guarantee to the gossips of the pair's guilt. Eaton was deeply distressed. He wished, on the one hand, to marry Peggy and "snatch her from that injustice of the City gossipers who attend to everybody's reputation to the neglect of their own" and on the other to avoid marrying her because of the inevitable "talk." Eaton went back to Tennessee to consult with Jackson, the new President-Elect who would perhaps include him in the Administration.

When he made tentative mention of such a marriage, Jackson had a ready answer. "Why yes, Major, if you love the woman, and she will have you, marry her by all means." That straightforward suggestion was not the one Eaton wanted. He said Peg's "own merits and considerations of honor" would impel him at a "*proper time* to tender her the offer of marriage." But there would be consequences. "The impossibility of escaping detraction and slander was too well credenced to me in the abuse of those more meritorious and deserving than I ever could hope to be."

Jackson's only answer, despite the compliment, was that if gossip had coupled Eaton's name with Peg's "your marrying her will disprove these charges and restore Peg's good name."

Eaton returned to Washington. "In December 1828 he made the offer of marriage in the presence of my father and mother." Peg had her lawmaker at last. No specific date for the wedding was set save "after the adjournment" which meant following Jackson's Inauguration and Cabinet announcements. It was Jackson who

decided the date in a letter to Eaton pleading with him not to endanger Peg's good name by remaining an inmate of the O'Neale household any longer. "Marry Peg forthwith" or "change your residence."

Eaton would marry her forthwith. "Your admonition shall be regarded," he wrote the next President of the United States. "In the first week in January, an honorable discharge of duty to myself and to her shall be met, and more than this . . . I rendered a happy and contented man."

Society made him a martyr to Peg's matrimonial machinations. A leader of the ladies' corps in Washington sat writing her sister:

"Tonight General Eaton, the bosom friend and almost adopted son of General Jackson, is to be married to a lady whose reputation, her previous connection with him both before and after her husband's death, has totally destroyed. . . . She has never been admitted in good society (!!!), is very handsome, and of not an inspiring character and violent temper. She is, it is said, irresistible and carries whatever point she sets her mind on. The General's personal and political friends are very much disturbed about it; his enemies laugh and divert themselves with the idea of what a suitable lady in waiting Mrs. Eaton will make to Mrs. Jackson and repeat the old adage 'birds of a feather will flock together.' Dr. Simm and Colonel Bomford's families are asked. The ladies will not go to the wedding and if they can help it will not let their husbands go."

The man's point of view is succinctly expressed by elegant Congressman Cambreleng, of New York, to his friend Governor Van Buren in Albany: "Poor Eaton is to be married tonight to Mrs. T. . . . ! There is a vulgar saying of some vulgar man, I believe Swift, on such unions—about using a certain household (*sic*) and then putting it on one's head." The gentleman was misquoting Montaigne.

Peg's first marriage in girlhood's glow inspired a poet to a tribute which had become the most widely quoted poem of its gen-

eration, while her second tie, in womanhood, incited a popular lady novelist to aspersion and a sophisticated Congressman to cynicism. Her first epithalamium was purely lyrical, her second impurely satirical.

BOOK III: TUGS OF WAR

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TUGS OF WAR

I.

PEG's second marital march was accompanied by martial airs. A tom-tom of tongues reverberated the strain—the Innkeeper's Daughter is now the wife of a United States Senator, the incoming President's favorite and almost certain to be a member of the official Administration. The only way to reach this social upstart was through one's husband. Snubs began in silent absence from the wedding ceremony, which a great many Congressmen attended, as well as Eaton's colleagues in the Senate. But the stamp was only semi-official. Men prevailed among those present but women really prevailed by their withdrawal.

With two young daughters in her train, Peg, at twenty-nine, was at the height of her beauty. "Her form, of medium height, straight and delicate, was of perfect proportions. . . . Her skin . . . of delicate white, tinged with red. . . . Her dark hair, very abundant, clustered in curls about her broad, expressive forehead. Her perfect nose, of almost Grecian proportions, and finely curved mouth, with a firm, round chin, completed a profile of faultless outlines. She was in Washington City what Aspasia was in Athens—the cynosure by whose reflected radiance

'Beauty lent her smile to wit,
And learning by her star was lit.' "

No wonder women found fault with her. It was dangerous to be both decorative and discerning. Homage in homiletic disapproval was given her while she was on her honeymoon in Philadelphia. Among callers who left cards at O'Neale's in the newly-

married Eatons' absence were Vice-President and Mrs. Calhoun, evidently in better spirits than the late eviscerated officialdom.

Washington was full of rumors and gloom. All Cabinet Ministers of the outgoing Administration were confined to their beds. Petty clerks clung to their posts with premonitions of early removal. Society, which deplored the "good families" loss with uncouth Jackson's advent, amused itself with visions of Mrs. Jackson smoking her pipe in the White House. They pictured Mrs. Eaton facing her in the fumes.

Mrs. Jackson disappointed them. She never drew breath, smoke-scented, in the Presidential Palace. A shopping tour, during which she overheard despicable detractions on her character, carefully shielded from her during the campaign, ended in severe illness. Death came the very day Nashville had planned a city-wide celebration.

Banner gave way to black, bouquet to wreath, and gaiety to grief. Jackson could not believe it. He ordered servants to spread four blankets on the board when they laid her out so that "if she does come to, she will not lie so hard upon the table." Her death was to lie heavy on his heart for the rest of his life.

"We were both at the Hermitage when her funeral took place," Peggy told. "It seemed as though the entire state were in mourning, and all her friends, including her servants, manifested the most poignant grief. General Jackson was wholly unnerved and inconsolable, for he loved his wife with the strength and devotion of his soul. He believed that the stories—rather lies—told about her during the Presidential contest, killed her, and from that moment he became the sworn and unyielding foe of all slanderers of women."

One day at table, Jackson was missed during dinner. Peg was sent in search of him. She found the man who had to proceed to Washington as popular President stretched prostrate on his wife's tomb. Gently, she won him over to reality. By the time she brought him back to the house, there was between them a bond, tender and true. When Eaton had to leave to arrange pre-Inauguration

details for the President, as well as to prepare for his wedding and plan for a very short honeymoon, Jackson undoubtedly felt that his friend had found a woman with whom he could be happy for some years of his life at least. The Presidency, now that the hallowed friend of his heart was gone, was but a hollow victory. God be thanked that he had been given the gift of life with her for a few years. That memory was to be the strongest in his whole remaining life-span, when his wounds for his wife were unsparingly spread with salt in a similar slander.

Washington, when the tidings reached there, was chagrined and conscience-stricken about its caricatures of the formless *frau*. All realized that Jackson's undying affection would affect public affairs. Bent but not bowed by his bereavement, Andrew Jackson started his journey toward Washington with a vow to administer the Government for the benefit of the people and to avenge his wife's slanderers. "As rational beings, it behooves us to live . . . as to be prepared for death when it comes . . ." he wrote a dear friend, but he came to the Capital with an irrational, irreconcilable gorge against politicians who used woman's virtue for political purpose. It was prostitution in its most putrid form, he believed.

In Washington, formal arrangements for receiving him included artillery-fire to announce his arrival to the crowds, already tremendous. Eaton, knowing that Jackson, at all events, would prefer to evade these ceremonies, rode out to Rockbridge to meet him, as pre-arranged. Jackson got into the carriage with Eaton, and the two, in intimate talk, passed unrecognized by guards stationed at Georgetown Bridge especially to give the signal. General Van Ness, reception committee chairman, mounted his horse to investigate delay. While on Pennsylvania Avenue, he met General Eaton's fine carriage with the gray mares and saw Jackson. He galloped toward the vehicle.

The crowds now knew that he had come. Shouts of welcome pierced through the diagonal thoroughfares until the party reached Gadsby's Hotel, now called the Indian Queen, though more

familiarly known as the Wigwam, where Jackson was to make his headquarters.

It was not lost to the Capital that the General had come into the city in Eaton's coach and at his side. Wonder of wonders that Mrs. Eaton didn't ride out and publicly monopolize the President, too. Probably she'd wanted to, but the Senator, who had sound sense in everything except his marriage to her, had dissuaded her. Dubiously, disapproval was redoubled, and the war-cry went up. Peggy's scalp was the game.

Jackson had been in the city but a few days when the entire Tennessee delegation called upon him in a body. They came not to compliment but to complain. Eaton, they suggested, not without tremors, ought not to be included in the Cabinet proper. Of course, Jackson might reward his friendship and political aid by appointment to some office but *not to the Cabinet*.

And why not? Jackson wanted to know. Who were they to dictate who should or should not be called into his Cabinet, pray? And why such a plea? Was Major Eaton unworthy, he asked testily?

To his face, they didn't dare disparage his best friend. Eaton himself, they answered, was worthy of any trust but there was an encumbrance. His wife, they told the incorruptible idealist who had just buried the love of his life, slandered and shamed by the same sources, had borne a bad reputation before marriage by her association with him. Jackson retorted that Eaton had married her, and a worthy man could hardly have made an unworthy woman his wife. His tone indicated that he considered that matter settled.

The self-appointed committee of moral indignation grew nervously insistent. But . . . but Jackson *dare* not give Eaton so high an office. Washington society would never receive Mrs. Eaton, Colonel Towson, the leader, declared emphatically. Who, snorted Jackson, composes Washington society? The ladies—was the unhesitating reply. The Ladies? Did the ladies suppose that he had come to Washington to make a Cabinet for their social pleasure, or for the

country, he demanded? Did the ladies think themselves superior to the woman who bore his best friend's name? Were they prettier, or more pleasant company?

That was not the point they made him understand. It was that no one would have opportunity to learn for himself. She would not be countenanced by respectable females.

They were too indelicate. The miniature of his late wife worn on his chest palpitated. Hadn't they made her name mud in respectability's cause? The dirty detractors! He'd show them what he thought of their filthy judgment of female character. He dismissed the delegation: Go back and tell the ladies of Washington I will name whom I will.

When James A. Hamilton, acting Secretary of State until Van Buren resigned the New York Governorship, came in shortly thereafter, he noticed that Jackson, "animated by a show of opposition," was "more like himself." He said, Hamilton wrote a friend, "this makes me well. I was born for storm and calm does not suit me." He was to get thunder and hailstorms from Eaton's appointment, but what of that?

Jackson only needed a concrete enemy to launch the offensive. He gave Major Lewis, his major-domo who lived with him at the White House and Eaton's brother-in-law, the Cabinet list. He wanted it printed in the next morning's paper, without fail. There was no time to lose. The next morning, the *Telegraph* published the news: Martin Van Buren, Secretary of State; Samuel D. Ingham, of Pennsylvania, Secretary of the Treasury; John H. Eaton, of Tennessee, Secretary of War; John Branch, of North Carolina, Secretary of the Navy; John McPh. Berrien, of Georgia, Attorney-General, and William T. Barry, of Kentucky, Postmaster-General.

"Millennium of the minnows," Washington scorned. "Among them all there is not a man capable of a generous or liberal sentiment towards an adversary, excepting Eaton, and he is a man of indecently licentious life," wrote ex-President Adams in his Diary when he saw the announcement. Henry Clay was "incredulous."

That Cabinet was "a bitter pill," he said. Astute political eyes saw two Northerners, two Southerners, and two Westerners in its composition. More biased ones saw only friends and partisans, and it was widely repeated that Eaton had been included only because Jackson wanted a confidential friend at his side. Calhoun was disappointed. He'd wanted one of his own friends in Eaton's place.

JOHN HENRY EATON, SECRETARY OF WAR. MRS. EATON, A LADY OF THE CABINET! Well, there *would* be war. Aversion was active. Ear-drums were the artillery, shot-gun weddings the ammunition. There was nothing muffled about the muttering:

. . . Public opinion will not allow of General Eaton holding a place which would bring *his wife* into society (for this is the difficulty). Everyone acknowledges Genl. Eaton's talents and virtues—but his late unfortunate connection is an obstacle to his receiving a place of honour, which it is apprehended even General Jackson's firmness cannot resist.—It is a pity. . . . Everyone that knows esteems, and many love him for his benevolence and amiability. Oh, woman, woman!—The rumor of yesterday was that he was to have no place at home but be sent abroad—so it was added (tho' evidently only for the joke of it) that he was to be minister to *Hayti*, that being the most proper Court for *her* to reside in.

The truth was that some switching might have been done if Peggy, who had "a passionate strength of resistance" and would see this fight to its finish, hadn't stumped it herself. Eaton had been told that he could be Ambassador to France or Postmaster-General if he wished instead. Peggy first learned of it at the British Minister's Ball, where she was plainly the belle, swaying with indisputable grace in her vivid silken skirts worn above the ankle, that season's style. A woman approached Peg in "a most obsequious manner, and congratulated me, and asked to have her son taken abroad with us. I knew she had been an active enemy. As soon as I could I said to General Eaton: 'Darling, are you going to France?' He replied: 'You say you will not go.' I told him I would never leave the soil of America until nine months were passed in the presence

of my enemies, and open proof given of the lies they told. General Jackson and my husband both complimented me for the decision, and Jackson said it suggested a thought which had not occurred to him before."

So Peggy chose the "Court of King Andrew the First" as that in which to preside. Very soon, they called her Princess Immaculate, "that delicate bone of contention," and it was reported that she repeatedly declared for her detractors' benefit that before the reign was over they should creep to her for forgiveness "on their marrow bones."

Though it gave her a reputation for profundity she didn't deserve, Peggy's scalp was still on her head, her head very much on her shoulders, and in it a set of brains equal to any woman's of her generation. She felt secure. She was not only a lawmaker's wife but the consort of a Cabinet minister. And entirely by her own attractions she was pleasing a President.

Inauguration was impending: the city swarmed with strangers, strangers such as had seldom been seen in the Capital before. Lodgings were at a premium, rumors not worth a penny. March fourth dawned clear and balmy. A gray-haired man with iron will, uncultivated but not ignorant, woke up to take the oath of office as President.

Within a fortnight, ladies made a fashion of frowning on Mrs. Eaton, the "new Lady" of the Cabinet, new only to the feminine phalanx, for she'd known the men all her life in the public parlors.

About Peg, the best topic in town, there were current

a thousand rumors and much tittle-tattle and gossip and prophesyings and apprehensions; public Opinion ever just and impartial, seems to have triumphed over personal feeling and intrigues and finally doomed her to continue in her pristine lowly condition.

A stand, a *noble* stand, I may say, since it . . . is taken against power and favoritism, has been made by the ladies of Washington, and not even the President's wishes, in favor of his dearest, personal friend, can influence them

to violate the respect due to virtue, by visiting one, who has left her strait and narrow path. With the exception of two or three timid and rather insignificant personages, who trembled for their husband's offices, not a lady has visited her, and . . . far from being inducted into the President's House, she is . . . scarcely noticed by the females of his family.

It was a house divided. On Inauguration Day, Mrs. Donelson, official First Lady, Mrs. Vice-President Calhoun, and Mrs. Secretary Ingham just didn't see Peggy:

She was left alone and kept at a respectful distance from these virtuous and distinguished women, with the . . . exception of a seat at the supper table . . . notwithstanding her proximity, she was not spoken to by them. These are facts you may rely on, not rumors—facts, greatly to the honour of our sex. When you see Miss Morris, she will give you details, which it would not be proper to commit to writing.

If the women didn't flock about her, the men did. The President singled her out for "marked attention" and perhaps overdid it. Yankee editors smart as a whip, who had flocked the people in party presses to join the Jackson brigade, wondered at the winning way she had of making political talk with a woman sound sensible and stimulating. One office-seeker whose family in its time had worn brocades and pigtails but had now turned Democrat with the rising Jackson tide, found Peggy a "strikingly beautiful and fascinating woman, all graciousness and vivacity; the life of the company."

That was the trouble. She was always too much the life of the company for ladies' taste, carrying over from tavern days the faculty of keeping men amused by her animation. And horror of horrors, she could be made hilarious by their attitude, instead of showing shame. This last attribute, attrition to effectual snobbery, was the stumbling block at which her critics stubbed their toes. No decent woman is impervious to insult, nor could she inure herself to it by minimizing its origin.

Who were those who snubbed her, anyway? "The great-granddaughter of a Puritan brewer, whose affectation of morals was as

stiff as her stays . . . the niece, four degrees removed, of a cavalier cut-throat who was sold as a convict to the James River Colony." Why shouldn't she consider herself the equal of a "mistress of a thousand slaves or the fair legatee of a New England rum-mill manager?"

Peggy, who could dramatize anything, even her birth, had a marvelous gift of mimicry. When she imitated the mincing way in which ladies attempted to hurt her, there was much laughter from Jackson and his cronies. And she roared with them. But soon, the merriment had a hysterical ring. The first president of the masses had to deal with a class problem; the first really democratic administration had a social war on its hands. But it was not entirely social, for shortly afterward R. P. Fendall wrote Henry Clay: "The government is supposed by many to be in the hands of Duff Green and Mrs. Eaton." As many men believed that as women. But the ladies were useful to pull Peg's hair. They made her out the Scarlet Woman of the Administration.

2.

Before the Administration had begun to survey foreign or domestic questions, Jackson had to expend all his extraordinary energy in extinguishing the blaze blown up about the firebrand Peggy.

It was a minister of the Gospel, God be praised, who brought out the privately whispered tales for public whitewash. The communication which sounded the fire-alarm came from Rev. Ezra Stiles Ely, in ex-President Adams' words, "a busybody Presbyterian preacher of Philadelphia." He cast the first stone, and a heavy one it was, with the portentous plea: "for your own sake, for your dead wife's sake, for your Administration, for the credit of the Government and the country, you should not countenance a woman like this."

Two weeks after Inauguration, which he had come to witness and when he had expressed his pleasure at Eaton's appointment,

Dr. Ely wrote Jackson from Philadelphia, describing in detail all the charges against Mrs. Eaton. He made a full account of it: from girlhood, she had borne a bad reputation; the ladies of Washington would not speak to her; a gentleman, the morning after the British Minister's Ball, said at his tavern breakfast table that "Mrs. Eaton brushed by him last night pretending not to know him; she had forgotten the time when she slept with him"; her servants were told to call her children Eaton, not Timberlake, for Eaton was their right name; a clergyman of Washington had told Dr. Ely that a deceased doctor had told him that Mrs. Timberlake had had a miscarriage when her husband had been absent a year; in an effort to save him from the amorous Peggy, Eaton's friends persuaded him to board elsewhere; Mrs. Jackson herself had had a bad opinion of her; Mrs. Timberlake and Eaton had taken trips together, traveled as man and wife, recording it on hotel registers in New York, etc., etc. And so it fulminated.

Jackson's first move was to fumigate it all with forth-righteousness in a three-thousand word letter. No one *here* seems exempt from slander used as political provocation, he said, his dead wife speaking through him and exercising more profound an influence on state affairs than any President's wife ever did in life. "First, let me remark that Major O'Neale is a Mason, Mr. Timberlake was a mason, and Mr. Eaton is a Mason; therefore, every person who is acquainted with the obligations of masons, must know that Mr. Eaton, as a mason, could not have criminal intercourse with another mason's wife, without being one of the most abandoned of men." Mr. Eaton's high standing gives "the lie direct" to such accusation.

How could Dr. Ely reconcile the rumor that "Mr. Timberlake said he would never return to this country in consequence of Mr. Eaton having seduced his wife" with the fact that, as he wrote, on the mantel-piece reposed a Turkish pipe Timberlake lately sent him through Eaton, whom he called "his friend"?

Of the man who remarked that Peggy passed him by without

recognition at the British Minister's ball, he "ought to have been instantly kicked from the table," and that Mr. Hyde didn't do this instead of repeating it to Dr. Ely, as a succulent piece of gossip, "didn't elevate him much" in Jackson's estimation.

"With regard to the tale of the clergyman (about miscarriage too many months after her husband's absence to make him out the father), it seems to me to be so inconsistent with the charities of the Christian religion, and so opposed to the character of an ambassador of Christ, that it gives me pain to read it." Jackson forgot that he was dealing not with a heavenly Saviour but a very earthy one whose mission was more messy than messianic. "The new Testament contains no such uncharitable examples as given by our Saviour while a sojourner on earth. I pray you write this clergyman, remind him of the precepts contained in the good old book. If he reads it, he will know where to find them."

On pain of Purgatory, Jackson would never have shown Peg the preacher's note. Eaton, though, must have read it, for Jackson adds, "I am authorized to say it was untrue that Mr. Eaton ever changed his lodgings, from the first time he went to Major O'Neal's to the present day, except for a few weeks" when business made it imperative that he be nearer the Capitol.

"I should like to know the names of the members of Congress who saw the names of Mr. Eaton and Mrs. Timberlake entered on the tavern register as man and wife, and date of those entries. If my memory serves me correctly, Mr. Eaton never traveled in company with Mrs. Timberlake but once, and then her husband went along, nor do I believe they went as far as New York, but in this I may be mistaken." Anyway, tavern keepers often set down names on arrival incorrectly including the woman as wife of the wrong man, "a mistake, I will venture to say, that often occurs. There is about as much truth in this story as the one that informed you that Mrs. Eaton was to preside at the President's House, or the one that represented her as intending to visit Philadelphia with Major Lewis, to assist in purchasing furniture for the Presidential mansion." As a

matter of fact, Mrs. Eaton was soon coming to Philadelphia to buy furniture for her own home. "I suppose she has a right to travel, as well as any other person, if she chooses to do so.

"Whilst on the one hand we should shun base women as a pestilence of the worst and most dangerous kind to society, we ought, on the other, to guard virtuous female character with vestal vigilance. Female virtue is like a tender and delicate flower; let but the breath of suspicion rest upon it, and it withers and perhaps perishes forever. When it shall be assailed by envy and malice, the good and pious will maintain its purity and innocence, until guilt be made manifest—not by *rumours* and *suspensions*, but by facts and proofs brought forth and sustained by respectable and fearless witnesses in the face of day . . ."

Despite his almost peremptory order to Eaton to marry Peg, Jackson was sincere in his efforts to show that, if she was altogether too indiscreet, she was not criminal in intention. In truth, she was singularly innocent of evil intent or she might have suffered more acutely under the adulterous accusations. Jackson knew that she was clever enough to be covert had she wished to conceal. He was indefatigable in investigating charges and corraling proofs to annihilate each insinuation. He sent detectives to New York to scrutinize hotel registers, to interview tavern keepers; he sought written testimony from men who lived at O'Neale's. There were more than a dozen of the latter, absolving Peg from criminal conduct; certificates from Timberlake's shipmates that he spoke with tenderness of his wife and children, as well as of his friend, Eaton; and certificates of good character from men who had known Peggy.

One of these is particularly telling. "This is to certify," read the affidavit, "that I have known Miss O'Neale, now Mrs. Eaton, since the year 1816. During that period I have sundry times lived at her father's Hotel, and I never knew any act of the above named female, that I conceive to be contrary to the character of a virtuous woman. This on honor."

It was signed "Edward Wyer (of the world)," and certain it is

that it took a man of the world to recognize Peggy's natural characteristic of artlessness as differentiated from artful seduction. Only a cosmopolite, steeped in centuries of restraint, could appreciate her spontaneity as a virtue. Self-conscious America, outgrowing infancy as a nation, was adolescent in its sex-consciousness and clung tenaciously to the morality which had been so practical for pioneers, in which women lived not by their senses but by their sense of duty. Jackson's sense of duty to his dead wife and to Eaton who had helped defend her made him collect almost a hundred pages of testimony on Peg's purity. Peggy O'Neale's personality now became subject for secret state papers.

Washington was abuzz with secret slanders, but wild horses couldn't drag original sources from any of the accusers. (It took a woman's unremitting insistence to accomplish that.) But now there was a new element in the affair, one which was enough to drive one wild.

Brigadier-General Call wrote with cocksure conclusiveness admitting he informed Ely and that Eaton had "one blemish and a thousand virtues," but his wife "is an unworthy associate for the ladies of your household. While living in the same house I had such evidences of her conduct, as to convince me of her want of virtue . . . I do fear, General, that this lady will create a difficulty among some of the members of your cabinet. . . . She will not be received in the families of the other members. . . . I think you will find me correct. . . ."

Jackson first tried patience. Now, "my dear Call, *you* have a right to believe that Mrs. Timberlake was not a woman of easy virtue if ever anyone should," Jackson remonstrated in a very long letter. Call seemed not to recall; at least, he didn't take the hint. So another correspondence was necessary to re-establish that Jackson's memory still held the vision of Peggy defending herself with tongs against Call's approaches.

Tactfully, the President tried to remind Call that investigation

would place him "in a very unpleasant situation." Surely, he argued, you "must recollect that from the day you and she had the quarrel, she never again appeared at our table and complained, as well as some of the other members of the family, that you had grossly insulted her."

Call was not heard from again on this subject. At least, not directly. Even Dr. Ely had to admit that the charges of travelling as man and wife had been investigated and found untrue. The utmost they could dig up were "imprudent familiarities" and those so named perhaps by a "Lady who may have been fastidious," Jackson said. Landladies at places where the Timberlakes and Senator Eaton had stayed related instead of derogatory tales circumstances that "did her much honor, and would do honor to *any wife* in any Country or age." Jackson was certainly catholic as well as charitable. All charges were disproved except the one about alleged abortion for there was no means of getting at the source of that slander. It was told about the town that a mother had fainted when she found that her daughter had visited Peggy, but truth brought out the fact that the mother herself had been Peg's guest. Altogether, the few months following Inauguration were times to try, if not souls, then patience.

Peggy broke under the strain. When the President was writing a friend that "the cloud was blowing over, though it has cost me some pangs," the cloud was ripped open ruthlessly by Mrs. Eaton's determination to get to the bottom of the scandalmongers. The lining was neither silvery nor savory, though sanctimoniously sacred.

While Jackson collected ninety-odd pages of proof of her purity, or more documentary evidence than all the foreign treaties signed in his two administrations, Peg took a page out of her own day-book and tried action.

"I went with my father and mother to Philadelphia. Leaving them at a hotel, I sought a friend . . . by the name of Bradford,

and went with him to Dr. Ely's house. Calling him into the parlor, (I) demanded the source of his information. He said he could not give it. Very well, said I, I shall not leave your house until I get it.

"'Come, let us walk in the garden,' Dr. Ely said, turning to Mr. Bradford, Eaton's Philadelphia publisher.

"'No, sir, you do not leave my presence until I have your author . . .'"

She won. "After further parleying and angry discussion, he told me he got it from Rev. Campbell."

Reverend Campbell? Why, Reverend J. N. Campbell was pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Washington at which the President worshipped.

"I told him (Ely) that it was all a wicked lie, and vowed that he should suffer for it. Returning to Washington, and without taking my things off, I went directly to Mr. Campbell's house and found him in the parlor with my husband, who didn't know I had been to Philadelphia on this business. I told him what I had learned . . . and asked him what object he had in filching from me my good name.

"Campbell proposed to have a witness to the conversation; said it was important, and I thought so, too. Just then Colonel Towson, an old grey-headed officer, came in, and we both agreed he should be the witness. In a moment I discovered he was as deep in the mire as the other was in the mud, and that it would be necessary to have the dates; so we sent to the Navy Department for a record of the time of the sailing of the 'Shark.' Towson's and Campbell's dates did not agree, and then Towson made an attempt to alter the dates . . . to make their story fit.

"When I saw Towson doing that I exclaimed, 'Great God, I am undone.' The man whom I supposed was a friend was proving an enemy. Then Major Eaton said, 'Sir, you must answer for this!' and attempted to get at Campbell. I seized him by the arm and prevented a collision. I fainted and fell, striking my head against the sofa. It was then that Campbell made use of the remark: 'Would to

God I never had anything to do with this' . . . and that he got his story from Dr. Craven.

" . . . Now Dr. Craven was dead, and I couldn't speak to him in his grave, so I went to his pastor, Rev. Obadiah Brown. Mr. and Mrs. Brown both averred that Dr. Craven had never said anything of the kind to them; on the contrary . . . had spoken very kindly of me just previous to his death, and had referred to a pot of preserves and a bottle of old port wine that I sent him . . .

" . . . I found out from friends and neighbors that Rev. Campbell had been moving heaven and earth for proofs against me. He had even been to my laundress and my mantua maker, Mrs. Williams. Her husband was a sailmaker . . . who said that he had better get out of the house or he would kick him out . . ."

But officially a minister of the President's Church could not be treated so unceremoniously, even though he went snooping for slander about the President's chosen Cabinet Minister's wife. The interviews began in dignity but ended in indignity on each side.

Campbell came to the President. You know my business, he inferred. Jackson, "never having heard it lisp'd that Revd. Campbell was the individual" who promulgated the vile tale, listened while Campbell "detailed the information derived from this dead doctor whom he called by the name of Craven." Substantially, he recounted that the doctor had been called in professionally, but when he arrived an old woman in attendance cackled that he was too late. Mrs. Timberlake had miscarried and he'd lost a job. Now the doctor knew Timberlake was at sea and "that the infant could not be his." Campbell's nervous manner in relating the story drew Jackson's particular attention. However, he let him finish. At the end, he commented laconically.

Come now, that's all absurd. No physician called in professional capacity could by law divulge "secrets of the sick bed," in the first place. Campbell countered that perhaps the doctor had happened "accidentally in." Still more silly, argued Jackson. In the second

place, did he suppose Peggy such a fool? Is it likely "that a married woman so long absent from her husband that everyone must know the child could not be his, would so wantonly publish her own disgrace and infamy to the world, when she had no need of a physician in her private chamber?" This version of the story violated "every feeling of human nature" and was too incredulous and ridiculous to be believed by a man of good sense.

And what was the date of this "transaction"? the President inquired imperiously.

Campbell confessed that it was 1821.

1821? Indeed, I believe Timberlake was present the whole of that year in Washington. Are you sure of that date?

Certain, the minister maintained.

Jackson asked if Campbell was "aware of the situation he would be placed in, if, on inquiry, it should appear that Mr. Timberlake was in this country and never out of it in 1821?"

He "must have been absent that year," Campbell stoutly affirmed with maddening self-confidence.

The President ushered the minister out, and lost no time. "At once determined to have an inquiry made," he learned through Major Lewis, by now known as his Man Friday, that Timberlake had, indeed, been at home all that year. To convince himself, Jackson went up to Major Eaton's.

Peggy was still in bed with a bad bruise on her head from her fall in Campbell's parlor. But she was not too sick to tell the President that Timberlake's business account books could be examined by anyone, showing that she had nothing to fear. Jackson saw the books with Timberlake's handwriting therein until February 1822. He took extracts to exhibit to Campbell. Now Jackson was complacent, convinced that Campbell would "see the cruelty of his charge" and apologize to Peggy.

Campbell did nothing of the sort. He was impervious to Jackson's proofs, shock-proof to his statements about Timberlake's

presence. Jackson somehow must have mistaken him about the date, he enunciated with a certainty that gave the President only guarantee of his guile.

Mistaken! roared the infuriated Jackson! Why the date was the one certainty "altogether important to the guilt or innocence of the female concerned," and he had been extremely careful to note the date the minister gave. Well, if that wasn't the date, what was it then? The minister would make no reply. "But no, no date could be named," Jackson wrote Dr. Ely in Herculean agony at Campbell's wishy-washy chronology.

The President had something to settle with Ely on his own score. That Mr. Hyde had been found in London. Of that remark overheard at the tavern table about Mrs. Eaton's neglect in recognizing a man who made further claim on her than she on him, Hyde said the charge of "high treason" could not have astonished him more. After this, there was quiet from Ely, although he claimed this Mr. Hyde not the right one. Jackson thought it all a game of hide-and-seek, the whole way round. Nobody took any responsibility. Ely wanted no more to do with the affair, and piously hoped that Peggy "makes Major Eaton a good wife, and gives you no trouble."

Trouble, however, was the very stew in which Cleric Campbell found himself embroiled on home ground. He got so frightened of his position that he hired counsel, Mr. Francis Scott Key, of Star-Spangled Banner fame, who tried to hoist a flag of peace. Duff Green, editor of the *Telegraph*, acted as "mutual friend" and tried to "allay unpleasant excitement" he was induced to believe "originated in petty jealousy and idle tittle-tattle." He sided with Eaton that Campbell could not evade responsibility for the source and date of the scandal. He must either meet it, or deny previous accusations.

Mr. Key prevented the imminent possibility of a slander-suit in court, although he thought his client had "sufficient proof," by suggesting cessation of hostilities until Dr. Ely came down from Philadelphia and a joint council was held.

In due time, Dr. Ely arrived, and Jackson supposed consultations held. However, no moves were made by the ministers either to rectify or reinforce charges. Perceiving no outcome, like the good General he was, Jackson marshalled sides unsparingly. He was ready for victory or defeat. So must all. He trusted Eaton and Peggy, come what might.

Peggy became a national problem. On September 10th, the President called a Cabinet meeting about her character. In his letter requesting Ely and Campbell to attend, it was Jackson who now went high and wide to buttress his belief, calling upon "justice to her, to myself, and to the country" for their coming. He wished this Cabinet council that there might be no misunderstanding of his motives. He believed implicitly in Eaton's moral worth. Others obviously didn't.

That Jackson was sincere in upholding Peggy and Eaton as free from pre-marital intimacy was believed by even the most rabid dissenters; that they believed they could convince him contrarily demonstrated theirs. They were both bad psychologists: they, in judging the President violable from his violent prejudice against political pan-handlers of purity; he, equally culpable as judge of justice on earth, by his belief that spreading the gospel of facts against her guilt would do else than augment it fantastically. In vain did he protest too much. Peggy would become legend.

There sat the Cabinet: in seats near the President were Van Buren, with bland countenance, and Barry, beaming with friendliness, both confident of Jackson's integrity, whatever the witnesses said. In other seats sat calculating Calhoun, watery-eyed Branch, sharp-nosed Ingham, and tight-lipped Berrien. They came convinced of Peg's guilt. Eaton, mercifully, was absent, but represented by Major Lewis. Gossip said Mrs. Eaton was there but it was untrue.

Jackson addressed this official assemblage, first upon contemptible calumny in general, and then on Mrs. Eaton's character specifically. Rumours, vile rumours, had been set in circulation, he said. Two

ministers admitted their origin, he went on, innocently hoping to convert animosity against Peggy to truthful acceptance of her. With acrimony, he dwelt on the disparity between Campbell's first date of 1821 and his second of 1826. Campbell could hardly be held correct both times. Jackson called upon Dr. Ely first. When this politic preacher gave his version, he admitted that there was "no evidence to convict Major Eaton of improper conduct."

"Nor Mrs. Eaton either," interrupted the President.

"On that point," withdrew the Doctor, "I would rather not give an opinion."

Jackson announced his without reserve: "She is as chaste as a virgin!"

Cleric Campbell came to the fore. He wanted to say in his justification that his aim in the entire affair was to "save the Administration of General Jackson from reproach, and the morals of the country from contamination." He had communicated "nothing to the opponents." Fool that he was, he didn't see that he made enemies within the Administration ranks more deadly than others. He started to assert that his evidence—but he never finished that sentence.

For Jackson broke in that he was summoned to *give* evidence, not to discuss it. Cleric Campbell bowed, and left with the parting shot that he stood "ready to prove, in a court of justice, more than I have said."

Peggy was now the cause of a national controversy, her innocence an implied Administration policy.

Eaton, who could have impaled the cleric with his contempt, restrained himself from communicating with Campbell "that highly exciting feelings might have no agency in the matter." He had never "dreamed of going to law." Courts would never find him before them for "personal wrongs," not even to punish one "who can find himself brave enough to circulate a slander and too much of a coward to repair it."

Eaton had sought "nothing of generous action; justice is all that is hinted at!" He had "lived in the world too long to know that the man who is capable of a wicked attempt upon character is too cold, mean and heartless to be reached through any other channel than a dread of punishment. Because of your religious profession, you think yourself safe from this, and perhaps you may be.

"You have ushered forth a vile statement . . . when called upon to affirm and support it, you merely draw back, and retiring under your assumed clerical consequence, refuse to answer." Why didn't he really act the man: "prefer your defence . . . or retrace your steps . . . or repair the wrong." Campbell could bring himself to no straight-forward course but must zig-zag. Very well, "under these circumstances" Eaton would "omit no occasion to pronounce you everything a gentleman should not desire to be considered." Furthermore, Eaton did not intend to spare him, for he felt himself free to do so "to your face, whenever and wherever, I . . . have the *honor* to meet you. Till then—adieu."

The parting phrase was clearly Peggy's. Certain it is that she dramatized this imaginary face to face meeting of ministerial withdrawal and manly acknowledgment. She could be a little vulgar and greatly effective. The minister must have found the threat vivid, for he was visibly worried. It showed on his sermons. His prestige suffered. His congregation complained. President Jackson quit his church, convinced that he wanted no celestial counsel from a cleric of this calibre. Before several months had passed, Campbell, who told ex-President Adams he couldn't live "in fire," saw fit to accept a call to Albany, N. Y. But others saw fit to:

"treat on

Thy chivalrous defence of pure Peg Eaton
Who, not alone correct in her own carriage
Saved others' virtue by promoting marriage.
You stood forth then like Mancha's peerless knight
The *chaste* to shelter, and the wronged to right,
You also in another point resemble

The Champion who made friends and foes both tremble.
An innkeeper he took for Castellan.
You a . . . for an injured man,
Of blunders stranger he committed more
And you, oh Andrew, "By the Eternal" swore
She was as Diane pure whom many knew a
Nay, further, from your pocket money paid,
The *reverend* gent, who in *full displayed*
Advertisement in the great Globe inserted,
Said that on Sunday next would be exerted
His feeble powers to prove how wicked 'twas
To be censorious without good cause,
Alas! you didn't find the matter mended
Tho' you and Mrs. Eaton both church attended . . ."

3.

Peg recovered from her illness, and in her rebound caused all Washington to divide into two camps—those who called on her and those who did not. Mrs. Calhoun headed the opposing camp. To her tent flocked Mrs. Donelson, Jackson's niece; and the families of Cabinet Ministers Branch, Ingham and Berrien. No important ladies visited her or invited her to their parties. When half the Cabinet with which Jackson had surrounded himself at Eaton's urging so snubbed Mrs. Eaton, it was obvious that General Jackson would need strategy's aid.

Fortunately, he had close at hand one who was past master of the art. Martin Van Buren, whose father had also been a tavern-keeper in Kinderhook, decided to treat all impartially. So he soon began negotiations with foreign ministers in Washington on behalf of the President's favorite. Thus, very early in the game for Presidential succession, he placated Jackson where his other officials infuriated him, soothed where others made him sore. Van Buren was a widower. Of course that helped. Both Sir Charles Vaughan, British Minister, and Baron Krudener, Russian Minister, who joined the

campaign in his company, were bachelors. The trio made a triumphant time of it for proud Peg.

Mrs. Smith, with smug self-importance, chose to ignore this:

Mrs. Eaton continues excluded from society, except the houses of some of the foreigners, the President's and Mr. Van Buren's. It is generally asserted that if Mr. Van Buren . . . persists in visiting her, our ladies will not go to his house. We shall see . . .

She saw, however, that instead of ceasing to call on Mrs. Eaton, the smooth Secretary of State continued to make her the center of his social events. Nor did the "foreigners" fail the Secretary. Mrs. Smith neglected to add that Peggy had the edge on the ladies: at her feet were the most important men; in her train followed foreign ministers in full regalia and War Department officers in uniform. With this entourage, she didn't particularly pine for female company, preferring political talk with men to petticoat prattle with women.

When feminine company was proffered, she chose carefully. Her personal favorite was Minnie Bankhead, the British Secretary's wife, titled in her own right, who undoubtedly thought persecution of Peggy a very provincial business. Then, there was Mrs. William T. Barry, the Postmaster-General's wife, and a Kentucky thoroughbred. Peggy liked and had a real respect for Anne Royall, America's first real woman reporter, who just had the uncommon distinction of being tried in the Supreme Court as a common scold—all because she printed what she thought about the personnel of Congress and political grafters. Virago in ink, this vigorous widow of sixty was a person to reckon with in the Capital. Courageous, callous to bribery, she would have her say. In her trial, which was certainly one of the funniest the grave judicial chambers ever witnessed in this country, Eaton testified in her behalf and paid her bail.

As for the other ladies, Peg's summary was scant: "I was quite as independent as they, and had more powerful friends. . . . To tell

the truth, Mrs. Donelson, Mrs. Calhoun, Mrs. Branch and Mrs. Ingham were a very indifferent set, and if half the stories they told about the latter were true, she was quite as bad as they tried to make me out. None of them had beauty, accomplishments, or graces in society . . . and for these reasons—I say it without egotism—they were jealous of me. Mrs. Branch was particularly noticeable as a first class dowdy, and it was a great relief not to be obliged to entertain any of the set a great deal. Mrs. Ingham was a large, coarse, brawling creature raised too suddenly into a position she little knew how to fill. . . .”

That was the underlying grudge against Mrs. Eaton, whatever private morality dictated. She was born of lower station than she achieved, and she knew too well how to fill the latter. But hadn't she been in training since childhood for this place in society? A man could lift himself from poverty but a woman was destined from birth to her position. In a country which shook off the caste system in precept, its grip in reality was inflexible.

Fortunately, one lady has left her doubts public. Mrs. Josiah S. Johnston, wife of the Senator from Louisiana, wrote Henry Clay that Mrs. Eaton had made her a visit while she was out. “I have not seen Mrs. Barry or Mrs. Eaton. They called together. I wish to spare the feelings of the latter as long as possible, as I fear I shall be compelled in accordance with the arbitrary decrees of society here, to leave her visit unreturned. I am sure you will not blame me, when I tell you that my sympathy has been excited for her, and her husband. Women are the greatest persecutors of their own sex, quietly or otherwise where Christian charity should incline us to forgiveness. Perhaps I have taken a wrong view of the subject. It will, however, be of little consequence to the unfortunate person if I never see her or express my feelings to the world.”

Evidently some ladies who snubbed her secretly felt sorry for her. So did some men. Major Barry, Postmaster-General, who was now making his home with the Eatons, wrote his daughter of Peggy:

she appears . . . an artless, sincere and friendly woman, who "may have been imprudent, as most of the ladies here are, but I cannot believe she was ever criminal. Major Eaton is himself one of the most estimable men I ever saw; he is the confidential friend of the President, and has quite as much, rather more, weight with him than any member of the Cabinet [aye, there's the rub]. The truth is, there is an aristocracy here . . . claiming preference for birth or wealth, and demanding obeisance from others, they allow none but sycophants who cringe [and Peggy never cringed] to have standing or character. Mrs. Eaton was the daughter of a tavern-keeper belonging to the democracy; she has by good fortune (if it may so be considered) moved into the fashionable world. This has touched the pride of the self-constituted great, and awakened the jealousy of the . . . envious."

Envy had sound foundations. All the Yankee writing fry surrounded her, surrendering to her wit. Unmarried, unprejudiced foreign ministers, with wider views of virtue than those held by a society in which "the women were as conventional as the men were coarse," were fascinated by her vivacity.

Albert Gallatin, ex-Secretary of the Treasury, wrote home describing a Presidential dinner: There were "fifty guests . . . one hundred candles and lamps, silver plate of every description, and for a queen, Peggy O'Neale, led in by Mr. Vaughan, as head of the Diplomatic Corps, and sitting between him and the President."

While all Washington was breathless with debating whether Peg was invited here or there, she seemed to set small store by the honors accorded her. There were celebrations for her at the British Minister's and the White House, but "Mrs. Eaton (this much slandered lady) declining the invitations to dinner, had had poor Leonard [Barry's sick son] in her arms day and night without sleeping, nursing him as tenderly as her own child." Jackson cared less for honors than human life, too, for he "quit his company at an early hour after dinner" and came down to Eaton's to sit by the child for several hours.

When Leonard recovered, the Russian Minister, Baron Kru-dener, second only in social power to Great Britain's representative, gave a grand fete for Peggy. Van Buren, too, gave a ball in her

honor. There she met her Nemesis in the person of Madame Huygens, wife of the Dutch Minister. She was not so sympathetic as Minnie Bankhead. During the evening, cotillions mysteriously dissolved whenever Mrs. Eaton's graceful figure swung toward them. When Peg saw that it was an organized attempt to embarrass her, she grew perverse. Dancing with the Russian Minister himself, exotic in high-heeled red slippers as was she in black and silver flounces on dress of silver sheen, Peggy paid them back. Deliberately she put a black-satin slipper into cotillion circles. Calmly, she waited for them to vanish. She was incorrigible. It was appalling. This Mrs. Eaton was too oblivious to opprobrium. Could nothing be done to crush her?

Apparently nothing, as they soon saw. The supper-table seat of the Dutch Minister's wife was set beside Mrs. Eaton's. Rather than suffer such neighborly contact, the large-bosomed, majestic woman took her puny husband's arm and marched out of the room amid a pall of silence. Only Mrs. Eaton had enough presence of mind to raise her eyeglass and send a sally after the retreating pair.

"What an elegant carriage she has!" admired the audacious Mrs. Eaton, more gracious than the rest of the company. At that, tension snapped and Peg led the talk. For a week, nothing else was heard in Washington. Ex-President Adams confined himself "to the Russian and Turkish War" of which he was then writing instead of following the Russo-Dutch-American fracas close at hand. Peg was the center of an undignified diplomatic squabble.

This time when Peg imitated Mrs. Huygens for Jackson he did not laugh. Instead, he swore he'd send the Dutch Minister back to his country. His profanity became more pitiless when he heard that the Dutch grand dame intended to give a ball inviting all officialdom excepting only Mrs. Eaton, and was to be followed by Branch, Ingham and Berrien, of the Cabinet. That he would not allow. It was too open and deliberate an attempt to "drive Mr. and Mrs. Eaton out of society." Sporting his red plush vest and

green bag, Congressman Richard M. Johnson, with the President's sanction, called upon these three spiteful Cabinet Ministers. He made them understand that the President wouldn't tolerate any Cabinet members who definitely, defiantly snubbed his friend Eaton in such official manner.

Branch answered that he couldn't control social sets with which his family mingled. He'd rather resign than have Jackson dictate who should be received in the privacy of his home. Berrien and Ingham agreed with him.

So the anti-Peggy Cabinet sentiment was as strong as that! A few days later, the President called another Cabinet meeting. In his hand he held a memorandum, which said that the discrimination against Mrs. Eaton's company was "not only unjust in itself, but highly disrespectful" to him and "well calculated to destroy the Harmony of my Cabinet."

His Cabinet was an official unit; it should also be a social unit, voluntarily:

I do not claim the right to interfere with the domestic relations or personal intercourse of any members of my Cabinet . . . but . . . from information and my own observation on the general course of events, I am fully impressed with a belief that you and your families have, in addition to the exercise of your . . . undoubted rights in this respect, taken measures to induce others to avoid intercourse with Mrs. Eaton and thereby . . . exclude her from society and degrade him. . . . It is impossible for me upon the fullest and most mature and dispassionate consideration . . . to regard this course in any other light than a wanton disregard of my feelings and reproof of my official conduct.

It is I . . . (who) . . . without any desire on his part called Major Eaton into my cabinet, and it is I, that with the fullest conviction of the injustice of the imputations cast upon his wife, continue him there. If her character is such as to justify active measures on the part of my Cabinet to exclude her from virtuous society, it is I who am responsible to the community for this alleged indignity to public morales. I will not part with Major Eaton . . . and those . . . who cannot harmonize with him had better withdraw, for harmony I must and will have.

It is vain for me to disguise the true aspect of the question, and it is not

in my nature to do so if I could; nor can I consent to harbour any feelings toward those with whom I am acting daily without distinctly expressing and apprising them of those opinions . . . my whole life has been at variance with such a course, and I am too old to practice it now, I must cease to respect myself when I find myself capable of it.

Eaton's dispassionate consideration shines through every sentence of this address. It must have calmed the offending trio, for Jackson noted that they agreed "that nothing on their part should be done to destroy the harmony of the Cabinet."

Nevertheless, Branch gave his landlord notice that he would quit his house at the end of the coming session, and Mr. Berrien, unencumbered by wife but bearing paternal duty toward marriageable daughters, went about admiring Mr. Branch's "heroic virtue." All knew that the President meant what he said. Jupiter would have his Mars, "by the Eternal."

Very picturesquely, or so anonymous letter writers thought, Peggy was dubbed the fair "Bellona, Goddess of War," whose disciples, in classic lore, slashed themselves in adoration at her altar. The ladies were scratching now and left scars. And Peggy was forcing a rift between the President and his Cabinet.

But there was a more bitter pill the President had to swallow. Beside Cabinet snakes-in-the-grass, there was a serpent in his bosom. He couldn't control the domestic relations of his own household. Andrew Jackson Donelson, his nephew and private secretary, was distantly polite to Mrs. Eaton. His wife, Emily, a Titian-haired beauty who bore more than a surface resemblance to Mary Stuart in not knowing how to save her skin with another woman in power, refused unconditionally to recognize Mrs. Eaton. She was caught early by the Calhoun faction. And since Emily was taking Mrs. Jackson's place in presiding over the White House, that treatment of Peggy was ostensibly official.

Donelson as a youth had been sent to school in Washington under Major Eaton's care and knew his goodness. It was but natural

that he should be entirely neutral about Mrs. Eaton when the squabble first arose directly following Inauguration. Then Donelson wrote friends in Tennessee: "I have no doubt that the whole of it ought to be ascribed to indiscretions which time will correct, and which, but for that spirit of malignity so common now in society, would never have been construed as anything worse."

Yet a year later he was writing his wife that, whatever happens, she could not visit "the Madam," meaning Peggy. Donelson's brother, Daniel, had married Branch's daughter. As a consequence, Jackson's niece and nephew mingled largely with those who were not only averse to recognition of Peggy but actually up in arms against her.

When Mrs. Donelson at first attended official functions in company with the wives of Calhoun, Branch and Ingham, Jackson thought she was conforming to custom in choosing the highest members of officialdom. When he saw her prefer them, that was her private preference and entirely her own prerogative. But when he saw his dear Emily slight Peggy pointedly, there began to brew in his bosom a battle of loyalties.

There was Rachel, buried but alive in him; her nephew, held as son, who knew the cause of her collapse, and Eaton, his "steadfast friend and able defender of your dear aunt when assailed by these wicked political monsters." It was blood-betrayal. When Jackson's soul was torn by this direct stab against him by his own kin his nephew had "intimations . . . that my power to hold my place here depended upon my subserviency to the wishes of Mrs. Eaton." Donelson, who made clever political calculations, forgot to take into account that his dear Uncle was subservient to the memory of his dead wife's suffering in a situation similar to Mrs. Eaton's.

After Jackson pleaded with them, Emily made faint-hearted attempts to treat Mrs. Eaton with the "comity due all heads of Departments and their families," as the President urged. But she could not brook Peggy's arrogance. It equalled her own.

There was a storm at sea when Cabinet families went down

the Bay to Norfolk as guests of the President. When Mrs. Donelson felt sea-sick, and Peggy, in friendly fashion, quickly offered her cologne-bottle and fan, Jackson's niece, even in her extremity, disdained both. Peggy stiffened, and then "betrayed an extraordinary discomposure of temper." Mr. Donelson, who had not been an eye-witness but had a weather-eye open for such occasions, stepped up and offered Peggy his arm so that she could descend the steam-boat in safety. He did so, in addition, to find the cause of her dis-temper. He learned too much.

Peggy explained his wife's open cavil. Emily had plainly in public view, in confined steamer quarters where nothing went unnoticed, showed "a disposition not to be intimate with her." She also explained her outbreak as "the result of pity for my family" for Jackson had "agreed, if we did not behave differently from what Mrs. Donelson had then done, to send us back to Tennessee." Peg further announced that she had made that promise one condition of her consenting to come on this trip. Donelson knew these were no feints; in the first clinch, Peggy showed that her thought and Jackson's on this subject were inseparable in one vice.

After that, there were pretences of perfunctory courtesy between Mrs. Donelson and Mrs. Eaton because Jackson was inexorable. The representative of his dear, dead wife must not countenance vile tales by seeming to give credence to them. This was a democracy, and all must be treated alike, even the ruler's favorite.

But it couldn't last. It was too hollow. Even Donelson saw that "to require . . . a visit to Mrs. Eaton . . . where it was obvious there is no reciprocal respect" was degrading.

Peggy herself embowled the emptiness with a letter to the President. She defied a Royal Command to dinner which half her critics would have given much to attain.

My dear General: My dear husband . . . has expressed . . . the desire you had for me to dine at your house today. You know the cheerfulness with

which at all times I should be willing to do anything which would contribute to your idea of propriety, but in cases where my feelings are concerned, I know you would not require me to do what they would not sanction.

Circumstances, my dear Genl., are such . . . that under your kind and hospitable roof I cannot be happy. You are not the cause, for you have felt and manifested a desire that things should be different. . . . You meet to enjoy [y]ourselves, but there would be none to me. I agree to the suggestion my husband has made that it may be a triumph to some if it be said I were not invited, but what of that, it will only be another feast for those whose pleasure it is to make me the object of their censures and reproaches.

Reproachfully, she went on:

Whatever may be the cause . . . one consolation is had, that I have done all in my power to avoid it. I do not know what *tales* may be *borne of things* said by me to their prejudice, but I know very well that whatever they may have been they are untrue. I have spoken of your family in no other manner than a respectful one. Much injustice as I think they have done me . . . I have ever endeavored to return good for evil. But if in moments of cruel suffering I have permitted any harsh or unkind expression to escape me, is not an apology found in those persecutions, which heaven grant no member of your family may ever feel. But I have never done so. I challenge any one to say they ever heard me. Enough, pardon me for this interruption, but I could not say less in justice to you and myself, and I hope I have said nothing that is improper.

Donelson, as secretary, received this letter first. He took a copy and appended: "the only *unkind treatment* which my family can have practiced toward Mrs. Eaton is their refusal to acknowledge her right to interfere with their social relations, all else is imaginery or worse. This letter is abundant evidence of the indelicacy which distinguishes her character, and is disgraceful to her husband. Instead of coming to me as the head of my family for explanations they have invariably approached the President with childish importunities, first aiming to excite his sympathies, and then to pour upon them the poison which they had concocted for all who do not bow to her commands. . . ."

Donelson did not add that Major Eaton had written, a year before this, asking if Mrs. Donelson gave credence to slander without investigating it or considering how it affected her aunt, but that both had hedged in their reply.

When Peggy's note reached Jackson, he exploded. Like a roaring lion, king of the den, he put the cubs in their places. While he fashioned phrases of etiquette like "equal comity to all" and warned them that in censuring a censured woman they were misusing official power he gave them by residence in the White House, his action was votive offering to the godhead of good in him. With bleeding heart at the traitors in his own home, he sent Emily back to Tennessee. The White House was without a First Lady.

In the Cabinet appointment, the Eatons had won the first round outright; the second was a draw with ministerial dispraise, even though all charges evaporated upon investigation, and the third, of Cabinet meetings and *congés*, was a downright decision in their favor.

Weighing this evidence, Washington put two and two together and called Peggy the Unofficial First Lady.

"One woman has made sad work here; to be, or not to be, her friend is the test of Presidential favour," scribbled exasperated Mrs. Smith. "Mr. Van Buren sided with her and is consequently the right hand man, the constant riding and walking and visiting companion of the President and his friend, Genl. Eaton, while the other members are . . . looked upon coldly—some say unkindly and enjoy little share in the councils of state. . . . It is generally supposed that, as they cannot sit together, some change in the Cabinet must take place."

Like Van Buren, Peggy's tavern training, as well as inherited instincts, gave her kindly manners, polished by human contact. As a consequence, strangers thronging Washington found her salon truly hospitable. So they said office-seekers swarmed about her, and that she controlled the public patronage. A five-act play in which



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Drawn by George Gibbs

THE PRESIDENT'S DINNER TO PEGGY

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of Philadelphia, and Ladies' Home Journal.*

her husband was called the Prince of Influence and she the Princess of Influence showed the public temper, and perhaps the truth. In this satire, nonetheless, the author admitted that Eaton was a "perfect Chesterfield in politeness and refinement" and next to Van Buren the cleverest member of the Cabinet. Peggy, who "danced like a top on a pewter plate and waltzed like a whirligig," was the kind of beauty who "wears well," had spirit and fire, and fanned the flames of envy by her influence with the President. Eaton was privy to Jackson's private ear more completely than anyone about him, and Peggy probably had her share, too, as poems dedicated to her reveal.

They said she used promises of patronage to draw friends. Her enemies were equally guilty, for they threatened to withdraw patronage from anyone associating with her. Mrs. Susan Decatur, accomplished widow of the Commodore who died so sadly in a duel, was petitioning Congress for recompense for her husband's services. One day Mrs. Decatur received an anonymous note informing her: "you will injure your cause by associating with Mrs. Eaton. Your best friends are her enemies. ABCYZ (Confidential.)"

When Jackson saw this note, he hoped that Mrs. Decatur wouldn't be intimidated. With thought of the woman it seemed impossible to terrify, he added that such threats came from a set of gossips "who, in many respects, are greatly her inferiors, and in none, I believe, her superiors." Peggy always had his unbounded tribute. His nature, like that of so many soldiers, couldn't but admire a woman who was game. She fought her own battles with her own strength, just as she had wrested beauty's crown with her own grace.

Accused of making most of the President's appointments and of ruling him as "completely as he ruled the Democratic party," Peggy protested that she only made two appointments. "One was for humanity," she admitted, "and the other at solicitation of friends. The first was a son of the widow Coolidge who kept a boarding house in the first Ward. The other, Mr. Cooper, was appointed a

purser in the navy, and became one of my worst traducers. So she wasn't even safe from those she placed!

What profit all this public display? After having scored with scintillation many honors, she tossed them all aside and stayed at home. Let those who wanted her company seek it. Many came, especially those of the new political party.

Jackson gave a Cabinet dinner and deliberately placed Peggy at his right, the seat of honor. Openly, he made her favorite of all his official family. Women at the dinner were kept in place by the President's glaring eye. Peggy was the picture of innocence. But immediately, gossip established a liaison between the President and Peggy.

Some conceded that Jackson's immovable defence of her originated in "an amiable cause" . . . his devotion to Major Eaton who had been devoted to him in a similar predicament. Others hinted that Mrs. Eaton and the President were unwarrantably intimate.

This insinuation was the last straw to the man whose "nights of sorrow" in the White House went in a conduit of conscience to the Hermitage grave. Other tales about Peggy must be equally true, he concluded. Forthwith, anyone who refused to recognize Peggy reflected on him; anyone who favored her was his friend.

Peggy had pleased a President. What need had she to heed jealous gibes? She was mistress of the situation. Her gorge rose when they publicly said she was Jackson's mistress in the bargain. Such fools! Couldn't they see that his protection of her, despite their personal friendship, was belated rebuttal to his Rachel's critics? Why the General was as innocent as a child. If ever man was selfless, Jackson was, Peggy thought.

Better than anyone else, she realized that he was risking his Administration for her social success because of a principle. Her estimate of him as a man she gave at a later day shows how deeply she felt for him then.

One day, Van Buren and she were discussing this integrity, despite possible disastrous consequences. Van Buren said he thought

Jackson the greatest character America had yet produced. Peggy agreed. Van Buren begged her not to tell Jackson, for it would embarrass him. But the "Red Fox" knew Peggy couldn't keep so glorious a tribute from her hero.

The Hero was human. He beamed when she told him, beamed whenever he saw her. Soon, the opposition got wind of it. "Mrs. Eaton, I am told," a correspondent wrote Henry Clay, "flatters up the General in great stile and it runs down even to the hem of his garment like oil—but I must stop."

Van Buren, whose discreet manners enabled him to keep on good terms with all, did not stop with such suggestion to Peggy. A politician saw that "he has availed himself of many advantages, growing out of *that affair*. . . . His object is to make the most of it. . . ."

Peggy was being used by political friends as well as foes.

Soon, Peg became a national problem in the Capital crucible, where all things went in raw and came out highly colored. Ex-President Adams put it piquantly: "The Administration party is split up into a blue and a green faction upon this point of morals; but the explosion has been hitherto deferred. Calhoun heads the moral party, Van Buren that of the frail sisterhood; and he is notoriously engaged in canvassing for the Presidency by paying court to Mrs. Eaton.

"Mrs. Eaton is as much a character as Van Buren. Dr. Sim and his wife are among her enemies. They live next door to her, and in a house leased by her husband. About a fortnight since, Mrs. Donelson was visiting Mrs. Sims, and Mrs. Eaton saw the carriage standing at the door. The next day Dr. Sim received notice from Eaton to quit forthwith the house, though his lease will not expire till next December. The story goes, that a day or two afterwards, Mrs. Eaton, telling her milliner, a Mrs. Williams, of the notice given to Dr. Sim to quit, said 'If it had not been for that d d old granny, nothing of all this would have happened.' Whether she spoke those or the like words on that occasion or not is uncer-

tain, but it is her style of conversation; and there are many speeches of the same kind reported about the country as genuine examples of her ordinary discourse."

It was too true. Peggy, having mixed with men all her life, used contemporary slang and mild expletive, an unheard of style of talk for a lady. She swore like the cultivated gentleman of her time. These colorful additions to indigenous etymology gave her speech a vividness not soon forgotten, and her talk seemed to have a genuine spring of feeling. An American authoress, *soi-disant*, devoted a scene in a play she wrote to describing Peggy's use of the expression: "Damn it, I'm off." It sounds like her vigorous impatience for action, and that it became a favorite with disappointed office-seekers attests to its catch-phrase quality. It is hardly creditable that her conversation was confined to such talk, for to her dying day she had a flow of fascinating speech that kept well-informed newspaper correspondents captive, despite time and engagements.

During the first two years of Jackson's Administration, Peggy Eaton engrossed conversation in the Capital. Talk was wide-spread. Meanwhile went on secret whispers behind fans, and anonymous invective against the lady who lorded it over Presidential favor. One writer said Peg petulantly pretended that she didn't want to go to a White House levee where all the foreign ministers were invited because she couldn't understand their languages. She probably spoke in earnest, which was more compatible with truth than the pseudo-pleasure of less outspoken political men's partners. It is not unlikely that she gave the foreign ministers more delight than they gave her, and was so less American than ladies before and since her time flattered by European male attention.

They decried her origins, descending "to the plebian walks of life" to do so, and what they wished above all to do was to reduce her to "her proper level." If Andrew Jackson's advent meant the representation of the masses in the government, Peggy's fight against the narrow, feminine society of her day was as much a milestone in American manners and customs. Single-handedly,

before votes for women entered the country's consciousness, Peggy O'Neale showed by her participation in politics with her husband and his friends that a woman could function and must be recognized as an individual political unit, apart from her husband. Her battle on the surface was for social equality, for she was not born to the blue in the country which rah-rahed its red, white and blue emblem. Up to this time, a poor boy had as much chance of becoming the President of the United States as he had of attaining Sovereignty in any country in Europe, for a transplanted dynasty of puritans and plantation owners controlled the Presidency. A woman's chance for social, let alone political, consequence was correspondingly nil. A man of the people and a woman of the same rank reached premiere power at the same time. One was not entirely corollary to the other. That an innkeeper's daughter fought for social status in Jackson's time is an important coincidence, but does not confine what Peggy's imprint might have been.

When Jackson made her father one of five commissioners of the new national penitentiary, they sneered, and sent anonymous letters to the newspapers deriding his appointment.

The plebian set snubbed Peg as well. Those without ambition or abilities argued that to have gotten on in the world so well, she must have been "entangled in many a labyrinth on the crooked path."

Hounded by those who thought themselves of a higher destiny than her own, and by those who hated to see her rise head and shoulders above them, her life was made a perfect hell for some years. Both persecutors were equally heartless, and the squeals of delight they had in snubbing her must have sent shivers down her spine. Still, she was neither supine nor suppliant. She never pleaded for mercy, but wanted justice to be thought innocent until proven guilty. No proof was ever found throughout her long life for any of the indecent things said about her. While old hens cackled because her nature was more free than theirs, and old men and preachers with a penchant for gossip penned venomous tid-bits about Peggy, a few saw clearly beyond prejudice.

Daniel Webster had an eagle eye in a strong, forceful face. At this time he wrote: "It is odd, but the consequences of this desperate turmoil in the social and fashionable world may determine who shall succeed the present Chief Magistrate."

And so it did, for "Van Buren is the first favorite at court. He looks and acts like one having authority, with assurances and promises of higher elevation. . . . I never saw a man more flushed with hope. . . ."

The ladies had pulled a few strands of Peg's hair but, in the end, she gave them their political scaffold. Peggy not only pleased a President but he who pleased her became President.

4.

The defence of Mrs. Eaton was as official as it could be without becoming officious. But to no avail. The ladies could reach her through their husbands' conduct but her husband could not reach them through his, for gentlemen uniformly disclaimed responsibility for their wives' wishes. It was a Ladies' War. Men kill outright with cleanly conciseness; women inflict wounds which linger, protracting pain.

Shortly, persecution became both masculine and official. An anonymous letter-writer from Washington, (all were then anonymous perhaps the better to procure information), reported first, that a settlement of Purser Timberlake's accounts in the Navy Department found him out a defaulter to the Government for \$11,000; second, that John Henry Eaton, Secretary of War, had been his bondor to the amount of \$10,000; and lastly, and most damning to both, a correspondence had been found showing that Eaton asked Timberlake for money for investment in his father-in-law's hotel and had acknowledged the receipt of some.

Eaton found it necessary to insert an advertisement denying the implications. As ex-President Adams scribbled when anti-Administration papers reprinted the charge against Eaton, "it is blasting to his character. The imputations against his wife are deeply defama-

tory. The case is of a nature to drive him to desperation; and assassination or a deadly duel is the natural termination of such a course of incidents as are now in progress."

Eaton, who had bought O'Neale's houses out of pure kindliness, and asked Timberlake's aid as pure business, was almost driven to desperation one morning when he found an anonymous letter under his door. It read:

Sir: I have written a letter to Mr. Kendall about the money which paid for O'Neale's house; you know what I mean! Revenge is sweet, and I have you in my power, and I will roast you, and boil you, and bake you, and I hope you may live long to prolong my pleasure. Lay not the flattering unction to your soul that you can escape me. I would not that death or any other evil thing should take you from my grasp for half the world. IAGO.

Immediately, he went to Amos Kendall, fourth auditor of the Treasury Department, who had discovered defalcation on the part of the man who had previously held his post, to compare notes. Kendall's read:

You are very vigilant in discovering abuses among public officers as to money matters, but why vent your spleen on worms? Even these can turn, as you may find out. Let me say to you, inquire what became of the money drawn by Purser Timberlake that was paid to Major Eaton, who undertook the guardianship of his children and the management of his property for his *wife's sake*. Take a peep in the *bank*, see if you can find who bought the house, and where the money came from. You are the man to find out, and your own office and the bank can throw light on these matters. PAUL PRY.

The disguised handwriting coincided. But they weren't the only ones. Secretary of the Navy Branch received one, too, telling him that letters incriminating Eaton were on file in his own Department. Kendall, a Yankee editor of ability and one of Peggy's best friends, her husband, and Branch, one of her bitterest social enemies, though ostensibly Eaton's friend, were informed simultaneously of a movement afoot to force official discussion of the Timberlake-Eaton *menage à trois* and by public discredit, if not disgrace,

to drive Eaton from the Cabinet. Whatever his personal opinion, the President could not continue a defaulter in high office.

O'Neale's friends knew that Eaton had helped him in his economic emergency. Timberlake's, too, were fully aware that Eaton took the responsibility for the Purser's accounts, if the Secretary of the Navy thought their unsatisfactory condition precluded bestowal of a new post. Then, there was nothing secret in his aid, but now it was heralded as significant discovery. Eaton helped Timberlake, did he? But didn't he help himself at the same time, and in more ways than one?

Friendly phrases in Eaton's private letters to Timberlake were twisted to tortuous import. Their correspondence to and from the "Constitution" was freely circulated in Washington, for copies had been taken from Navy Department files. An enquiry was begun by the President. He wanted to learn the answers to these questions: Why was an entirely personal correspondence about private money matters returned to the Navy Department instead of being packed with the Purser's other private property which went to Mrs. Timberlake? What motive had his successor in segregating such letters, from a mass of others, except that he might turn them to his own account? Did his successor benefit in any way by his death? And what official in the Navy Department was responsible for copying private letters which the Government could only hope to retain until the case was cleared? It was then that a clerk named Henshaw cut his throat.

At the President's insistence, Secretary Branch ordered Kendall to make an investigation of the whole affair. He found that Timberlake had left over \$10,000 in gold in iron casks; that Lt. Robert Randolph had been made Acting-Purser afterward and credited himself with all of Timberlake's stock without repaying the late Purser's estate for the same; that gentleman, also, had paid off all sailors and still deposited over \$9,000 in a Boston bank when the boat landed. The Captain of the "Constitution" testified that a Court of Inquiry had been held on board to investigate the Act-

ing-Purser's conduct, on one occasion, and that he had supposed all Timberlake's estate straightened out in accordance with his orders to that effect. Sailors in far ports all corroborated that Timberlake had left a great deal of money on board at his death.

What happened to it, demanded Kendall? Surely the Acting-Purser didn't need \$10,000 to pay off outstanding debts against Timberlake's stores? Surely the Acting-Purser could hardly have accumulated almost that amount on a single crossing from Spain to Boston, which route left little chance for trading? And how could the Acting-Purser hope to make Eaton out the defaulter when his bond held him to payment for such delinquency? Did the Acting-Purser suppose that because he had married the Purser's widow that he would pay anything to clear Timberlake's good name? Eaton was a good man but he was hardly a goat. A lawyer of long standing, Secretary Eaton could hardly swallow the accusation of accepting governmental funds when the government held him responsible for such debt. Eaton himself said: "The two stories assuredly chime badly together for, were I the security, as is alleged, it would have betrayed a gross ignorance to secrete funds belonging to the principal, when, in virtue of the securityship, I could not fail to be personally liable. This made-up affair is too weak to produce effect upon any sensible mind."

However, when it was presented in full in the Senate on the third day of the third month in 1830, there was serious silence. Unacquainted with the real basis of friendship between Eaton and the Timberlakes, and married to the latter's widow, some were inclined to give grave surmise to the evidence *per se*. When it was referred to a committee, two members voted for summoning persons and papers, and two against such action. The fifth member, Tazewell, of Virginia, who subsequently quit the Senate from "pure disgust at federal politics," was absent "purposely," a committee member told ex-President Adams.

When the report of Kendall's investigation was brought into the House, Mr. Clay "demanded action." Congressman Samuel P.

Carson, of North Carolina, moved that the report be printed for posterity; while Congressman William Armstrong, of Virginia, made a motion that it lie on the table.

No! this shall not lie neglected! thundered one hundred and sixteen Congressmen. Yes, let us be sure before we print, pleaded only fifty-five, less than half. The proportion reveals the preponderant belief. A perusal of the Yeas and Nays shows the names of Mrs. Eaton's vigilant detractors in the former category, her defenders in the latter.

Preference for or prejudice against Peggy Eaton had now become political history. Every official Representative was now on record.

The Report was printed; Acting-Purser Randolph all but assassinated Kendall, and the Eatons had a sour foretaste of official persecution to follow.

Lt. Randolph was dismissed from the Navy by Jackson, though he retaliated in full measure by pulling the President's nose in public.

Just now, President Jackson's nose was very much out of joint, not only because the ladies of Washington were an enemy he couldn't cope with and Peggy Eaton couldn't conquer, but because he knew definitely that Calhoun was anti-Peggy. Soon, Eaton had a hand in showing up Calhoun as also anti-Jackson.

Calhoun had damned himself in his refusal to call on Peggy Eaton, wrote astute James Gordon Bennett as soon as the breach between the two Cabinet factions became perceptible. He had, indeed; especially when he told Jackson that ladies' laws, like those of the Medes and Persians, were susceptible to no change.

Mrs. Calhoun, her husband's cousin and a strong-willed woman in the bargain, declared "that rather than endure the contamination of Mrs. Eaton's company," she would not come to Washington at all, and remained, as ex-President Adams said, "in the untainted atmosphere of South Carolina." By her absence, she did not spare

her husband, for he often said he was obliged by his position to lead the opposition to Mrs. Eaton, but the truth was that he was still aspiring to the Presidency. That was the understanding with which he had taken the Vice-Presidency. Perhaps he misguidedly thought, since Jackson's personal popularity could be downed on no other issue, as canny Adams saw, a moral one might do the trick.

He was not, however, the only one running for office on the unwritten platform of "I will not countenance Peggy Eaton." Out in Tennessee where Jackson sent the bulky testimony of Mrs. Eaton's innocence, citizens were entertained in court-yard campaigns with speeches profaning and praising her, according to political alignment. Every large city of importance by now had a small group of persons aware of the Eaton affair.

In March 1830, but a year after Jackson's oath of office, they were concerned about the next election. If Jackson did not run, Van Buren was the favored son. Calhoun's hopes seemed spiked. He had been reasonably sure to succeed Jackson. Now there was another rival, Mrs. Eaton's champion. Through the *Telegraph* Calhoun declared it premature to ask succession questions. It was then that Eaton and Major Lewis saw the necessity for beginning plans for a new paper for the party in Washington. They had their eyes on Frank P. Blair, of Kentucky, a warrior with his pen, though frail in person. Not long after this, the *Globe* was established with him in the editorship. And it was fortunate for the Democratic party, for soon it was shaken to its foundations.

There was a Cabinet Dinner in honor of ex-President Monroe, who sat at the President's right. Eaton sat at his left. Next to him was Finch Ringgold, Marshal of the District, and then Major Lewis. At the foot of the table sat Van Buren. The other members sat on the other side near Monroe. During dinner, Ringgold remarked to Lewis that it was good to see Monroe and Jackson enjoying themselves, for Monroe had been his firm friend in opposition to the entire Cabinet during the Florida censure business.

Against the *entire* Cabinet, repeated Lewis? Were not Adams and Calhoun then friendly, too?

Adams wrote a letter to Spain in Jackson's defense, agreed Ringgold, but only at the insistence of Monroe, then President. As for Calhoun, he had been absolutely, unqualifiedly against Jackson.

This was serious, Lewis thought, though he had seen a letter intimating as much almost two years before. After the company had gone, Lewis called Eaton aside and disclosed Calhoun's defection at a grave moment in the General's good fame. Jackson sat smoking his pipe, as though lost in thought. But he heard them, incredulous. Could they procure written testimony from a Cabinet minister of that time?

They did. Calhoun had to confess.

Before the President had actual proof from Crawford of Calhoun's double-dealing, he wrote a letter about him which shows how inseparable he held the Vice-President's censure of Peggy Eaton and himself. It was sixteen pages long, on paper fully sixteen inches deep, written to a private friend who urged that Emily be allowed to return to the White House without the necessity of calling on Mrs. Eaton.

Jackson's family had become "puppets of J. C. Calhoun . . . who dreaded the popularity of Eaton, and that he would not be his supporter" for the next Presidency.

. . . Read the documents in the case of Eaton, keeping in view . . . that Dr. Ely, being the firm and decided friend of Eaton, and his note to me *not to operate against him*, and then his inquiry of me if Major Eaton was not *opposed to Mr. Calhoun*, and at once you will see that all this originated in a political combination to put Major Eaton out of the Cabinet and disgrace me . . . see who were the actors in this thing—apostate clergy, perjured masons; read and you will understand how the combination was got up . . . a combination unheard of before in any Christian country against female character . . .

Remember that "if Calhoun could have got Eaton driven out of the Cabinet, he knew it would afford him a channel of attack by which my standing would be destroyed and his elevated . . .

"You must remember . . . the pain I experienced, but the firmness of my course, when . . . the whole combination was exposed to me, and that my connections were countenancing it. I had feelings I hope never again to experience. They were still more acute when Andrew told me my family was not to continue such at the Hermitage, and when I saw . . . the great injury that had been done to my friend, the constant and undeviating friend of my dear, departed wife, it filled me with horror at the cruelty and wickedness of man, brought back to my view the various wicked falsehoods levelled at the fair fame of her who was no more, and who never deserved it . . . I could not but feel for my friend. . . . My course was taken. You know the rest . . .

But these things have gone by. The great delicacy is now how to restore harmony. I am taking a full view of the passing scenes . . . it must be restored and my Cabinet a unit again. If this can be without separating them, it will be a great pleasure to me. . . . If any choose to withdraw from me, however much I may regret it, they must go. . . ."

There was a postscript. "I have just this moment rec'd a copy of a letter from Mr. Crawford to Calhoun. . . . It is pointed and severe, and proves Calhoun a *villain*."

The last line spelled doom to Calhoun's chances for the Presidency, and deposition from official favor of all his supporters. Duff Green saw it, instantly. He had by now become Calhoun's spokesman, defending his course against Jackson at an earlier day through the *Telegraph*. Calhoun had quit Washington, so Duff sent him word through Governor John Floyd: "You may rest assured that they are resolved on an uncompromising war on Mr. Calhoun's friends. Please show this letter to . . . Calhoun . . . I sent it to you because I do not believe a letter from me to him could pass safely. (It was a habit they had of writing under cover.)

"Major Eaton," he went on, "is extremely ill with the croup and I am apprehensive that he will not recover. What may be the result, I do not pretend to foresee. . . ."

Ah, how easy it would have been if Eaton were removed by the hand of death! It would seem a sign from Heaven that Peggy was to be put out of her place.

But Jackson's prayers and Peggy's will-power pulled Eaton back from the brink of the grave. And just as he showed signs of recov-

ering, Duff introduced Mrs. Eaton's name in the *Telegraph*. He suggested that the President was making a misguided attempt to foist her on society because of his own unhappy personal experience. But Mrs. Jackson, he warned, unlike her successor for defense, had been neither worldly, vain, nor ambitious. A few days later, the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, friendly to Eaton, retorted that the President was both patriotic in defending the integrity of his Secretary of War, and true to his personal principles in upholding the wife of his chosen bosom-friend.

A war, wider than the confines of the Capital, thus began in columns of rival newspapers.

Eaton an invalid weakened from worry, social sets incensed but impotent to budge the inflexible President, the Cabinet incapacitated for conferences by rival camps, Peg still held the fort with invincible defiance. During a two-year struggle in which the President of the United States spent most of his energy on her evidence and eventual recognition, Peg maintained her impertinent independence. Matters had now come to a deadlock. Peggy Eaton was a political issue which divided society even more sharply than slavery, tariff or the national bank.

The solution to this social war of political origin, because both sides believed they were saving the same country, could never be an armistice.

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BOOK IV: A CABINET WRECK

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BOOK IV

A CABINET WRECK

I.

WASHINGTON was gripped in a shocked silence. Yet the British Ambassador, who looked upon Peggy as a delightful person, not a political pawn, sat writing bluntly:

I have the honor to inform your Lordship that, this day (April 21, 1831) a complete change of the Ministers composing the Cabinet of the President of the United States has taken place.

. . . I am sorry to observe . . . not . . . upon any public ground, but . . . out of an irreconcilable dislike of three members of the Cabinet to allowing any intercourse in private life between their families and the wife of Major Eaton, their colleague, the Secretary of War, in consequence of some slander to that Lady's discredit having been in circulation previously to the formation of the Cabinet, into which Mr. Ingham and Mr. Branch were introduced upon the recommendation of Mr. Eaton. Notwithstanding that every occasion has been sought by both the President and Mr. Van Buren, by marked attention to Mrs. Eaton, to prove to the world that they did not believe the calumny which had been circulated to the injury of her character, Messrs. Ingham, Branch and Berrien have permitted their families to persist in . . . refusing to visit the wife of their colleague, and a serious estrangement and dislike consequently took place amongst the members of the Cabinet to which it was necessary to put an end.

On the 7th instant, Major Eaton tendered his resignation as Secretary of War, which was followed by the resignation of Mr. Van Buren. The President having been obliged to accept the resignation of two of his Ministers in whom he had and still has unbounded confidence and for whom he entertains the greatest personal regard, immediately required the resignation of the rest of the Cabinet, with the exception of Mr. Barry, Postmaster General.

In a newspaper called the *Globe*, established not long since, in Washington, under the protection of Van Buren, a letter appeared this morning, addressed by him to the President on the 11th instant, tendering his resignation, but assigning as his motive . . . that the administration has been weakened and embarrassed, particularly since the President has announced his intention of consenting to be re-elected . . . by its being understood that Mr. Van

Buren, though a member of the Cabinet, was a candidate for the Presidency. Convinced that a member of the Cabinet, being an acknowledged candidate . . . must have an injurious influence upon the Administration, he begs leave to resign . . . the President, in a letter dated the 12th of April, consents, deeply lamenting the necessity of the step . . . having always found Mr. Van Buren "sincere, able and efficient."

Thus, Mr. Van Buren has contrived to place his resignation upon ground separate from those which, it is well known, have really brought about the dissolution of the Cabinet.

Sir Charles Vaughan's quill more than once quivered as he penned this quite extraordinary quota of news on a fresh sheet. Couching his communication in that exemplary ambassadorial language which endows the reticent word with a rigmarole of meaning, Sir Charles plainly told Palmerston that the failure of a few Cabinet ladies to court Mrs. Eaton's companionship had caused the summary dispersal of that august body of advisors to the President of the United States, a country but half century old. It was the introduction of Eve in the Eden of democracy, he intimated in that invisible ink of diplomatic dispatch.

What a *cachet* of news Vaughan could convey *en face* to his Lordship when soon he saw him, for within the month he was to sail for London. But now, at this distance, he dealt in documents. After a glance through the embassy windows to the ex-Secretary of War's home nearby, wherein he wondered whether Peggy was storming or submissive, he added:

I have the honor to enclose a copy of the Correspondence between the President and the Secretary of State, as it appears in the newspaper.

As it appears in the newspaper was cautious comment. That was all anyone was to see for a while.

Everyone in Washington knew that Peggy caused the Cabinet break-up but as yet no one dared name her officially.

Sir Charles was right. The protagonists were no longer people, but papers.

There was the *Telegraph*, past official party organ, which now wholly represented Calhoun, perhaps because the children of Duff Green, its editor, had intermarried into Calhoun's clan. Its function was now that of prosecutor of the Administration, for there was to be an impeachment in ink.

The *Globe*, the present official paper, with Mr. Blair wielding the pen, acted as defense agent for the President, Peggy, Van Buren, and the party *per se*. It was the White House spokesman to the public in a battle royal which preceded the era of personal journalism.

The *National Journal*, the partisan of Henry Clay, performed as witness. It knew the inside story of the Eaton imbroglio, and took every opportunity to affirm that it knew more than it could tell in anonymous playlets, poems, essays and consciously literary tidbits teasing Peggy.

The *National Intelligencer*, Washington's oldest paper, functioned as judge. It really aimed at impartiality, wishing to be swayed only by actual testimony.

These four Washington sheets formed a columnar court-room in which Peggy and the President were tried. Citizens-at-large were the jury, taking their convictions from printed testimony. And because there was no telegraph system, and correspondents who relayed news by letter had to rely on stage-coaches to take their messages, the country's editors, with impatient curiosity, not only read everything printed by fellow-sheets on the spot in the Capital, but copied and commented on the gospel truth procured from their party paper.

The opening fire, as often occurs with the guilty, came from the defense.

It was with annunciatory innocence that the *Globe* gave out news of Cabinet changes, remarking that "it is *inferred* that a new organization of the Cabinet is to take place."

"Inferred"? Indeed! What extraordinary powers of deduction conceded amazed politicians, paralyzed in their boarding-houses

and hotels where they were making preparations to take divergent paths toward home. It was a clever stroke to spring just after Congress closed.

Mr. Blair's laconic inference informed them that a *coup d'état*, both brilliant in conception and daring in execution, was to be perpetrated on the public. So Jackson had to sacrifice his whole Cabinet to smooth out Mrs. Eaton's difficulties. This was news for constituents, and campaign material proper. Better wait in Washington a few days more and watch the procedure. A thrill of admiration alternated with a shiver of apprehension. With one scalpel sweep, the President was ridding himself of Cabinet members that he might choose advisors less embroiled in antagonistic personal affairs and more at one with Administration policies, chief among which was the question of succession to the Chief Magistrate's chair. Martin Van Buren, in being put forward first in the resignations, was shown to the people as Jackson's choice. Personal antipathy, talk of states' rights and secession, as well as his non-recognition of Peggy Eaton, had cut the heart out of Calhoun's hopes for the succession.

Damned clever! Jackson had turned the tables, practicing the nullifying doctrine himself. His Cabinet came in a Unit; very well, it should go out a Cipher. Ingham, Branch and Berrien equal Calhoun; Barry, Eaton and Van Buren equal Jackson. Sum total, discord. Net result, dismissal. Mrs. Eaton, they were later to say, was the vulgar fraction which precluded equation.

All Washington knew Mrs. Eaton did the trick. But the country didn't. How long would it take the citizens to pierce the political manœuvre and penetrate to "Bellona," all wondered in the Capital.

And what caused Mrs. Eaton to surrender the fortress? Surely, she would never have given in of her own free will, without hope of ultimate victory. There was a catch somewhere. Better be on guard. She was a wily one. Her hand was in this, it was evident. Something must be in store for Van Buren, her official friend, for him to have relinquished his post. He was too ambitious to resign

merely for a woman, though he would use one as political stepping stone. And for Mrs. Eaton to have agreed to her husband's withdrawal from the official circle she dominated augured something stirring for her, too, they reasoned. Barry, her other friend, hadn't been allowed to leave.

Yet Branch, Ingham and Berrien, her enemies, were out, irrevocably out, it seemed, unless they ran for Congress again. And Calhoun was certainly effectually vanquished. Peggy Eaton had pricked their bubbles this time.

But Mrs. Eaton was strangely silent. One neither saw nor heard her. Was it victory? How curious, then, that she didn't celebrate in public, as comported with her usual triumphs? Best to trace her finger marks through the official correspondence, if possible.

Peggy Eaton, obviously, was a President-maker. Van Buren, her champion, was to be rewarded with the Presidency for his pains. Her power was even greater than they had feared!

Duff Green, Calhoun's champion, froze when he heard the news. He didn't thaw out enough for that day's edition to give his readers more than mere notice of the dissolution. Calhoun must be consulted before making any moves. Besides, pseudo-patriotism locked his lips. One couldn't mention Mrs. Eaton's name in print as the real cause of the dissolution without disgracing Democracy. Peggy's influence in Washington itself was one thing; her influence exposed to the country altogether another.

The *National Intelligencer*, with no especial Presidential candidate, splashed its editorial page with righteous indignation—the average citizen's reaction. It called the Cabinet crash

a novel occurrence in our country, and . . . an epoch in the history of the United States . . . though unexpected, perhaps, to many, will surprise but few.

This editor disregarded the reasons Van Buren gave for resigning, but he didn't venture to mention Peg, either. What would the

country think that a woman controlled the President! This staid sheet, which was the very last to publish anything against Peggy, rather sympathized with Van Buren. It thought the Secretary of State's real, unmentionable cause for resigning

of so perplexing a character, that he was sincerely embarrassed himself when he sat down to the task of explaining it.

This concluding sentence perplexed no one in Washington, but it did confuse country editors who copied it as authoritative.

They were even more confused when Clay's organ, the *National Journal*, which, like the *Telegraph*, had an axe to grind to the Presidential grist, hailed the event with heartiness.

Thus is this pie-bald Administration dissolved; . . . To what a state have we been brought by the infatuation which was so successfully wielded for the purpose of placing General Jackson in the chair of the Executive . . .

The editor perhaps felt Jackson's retirement would be hastened by drawing from privacy an infatuation, for in an adjoining column appeared this piece on Peggy:

ALLEGORY

A Grand Vizier once, of great pow'r in Turkey,
Conven'd on a Divan in a case very smirky,
One of the Harem, she was Fatima call'd,
By her menace, a certain D.D. had appal'd;
She had charged him with having a secret betray'd,
Which he as a teacher ought not to have said.
The Mufti exclaim'd, when he found her so fiery,
"Tantame celestibus onimisire?"
This made her rave more, as she deem'd it abuse,
Yet vain her attempt to extort an excuse.
The Mufti had told, what was very well known,
And this she insisted the priest should disown;
But he mildly refused, nor a word would retract,
Asserting that evidence should prove the fact.

Now the lady, in rage, to great Selim appeal'd
Saying "Aga! you only my honor can shield;
"The Hero of Sardis, who all foes o'ercame,
"Can surely protect his fav'rite's fame;
"Remember that Omar has written your life—
"Will you not protect your friend's lawful wife?
"A skillful defense, tho' 'twere not quite true,
"I may surely expect in requital from you."

Upstart'd the Musselman, prompt to engage,
And by Allah he swore in the heat of his rage,
He'd send for the preacher, and make him to rue
Unless he'd recant, and say 'twas untrue:
The Mufti was sent for—he quickly obey'd,
For, conscious of truth, he felt not afraid—
The Grand Vizier tried, the divine to o'erawe,
And then as a Jurist, he threatened with Law,
Concluding that he would, himself, in a court,
The lady's fair fame, as a witness support.
The Priest, with a smile, thus mildly replied—
"True believers, great sir, their chief must decide.
If you in defending, should step forth to give,
In proof, a *non sequitur*, a mere negative
"Twould grieve me to see our great master sport
With his dignity, for a frail woman in court—
Be assured, mighty Selim, your exertions are vain,
By the faithful, I can my assertions sustain,
And this interference would make facts too plain."

The Grand Vizier foiled, in attempts to browbeat,
Withdrew from the preacher to his lone retreat,
Yet wishing all tattle to hush in a trice,
He called on his Cabinet soon for advice,
As he to court martials had often applied,
For form's sake, and then their decisions defied;
He wish'd points to carry *à la militaire*,
But his council advised him to quash the affair;
Against Mufti Achmet 'twere useless to storm,
As Mufti, he was past the reach of reform;
He ranted and swore, but all he could do,

Was Mahomet to curse, and to give up his *pew*—
Thus no more from the Koran he'll lessons obtain,
Oppression to stop, and from passion refrain.
To woman and men, the Mantuan Bard sings,
What wond'rous events spring from very small things
'Tis said, the same council, now all distracted,
Lags on an existence, but merely protracted.
Distrust seals their lips and fear makes them mute,
While each other they hate, and their Grandee to boot;
And by their late herald, 'tis sounded today—
That Fatima's course has caused all their dismay—

America was probably deprived of another autograph of the author of the Star Spangled Banner by this anonymity, for Francis Scott Key was the one valiant rhymester "in the know" on the opposition who could so spontaneously commit his contempt to metre. Peggy inspired lampoon as well as panegyric.

The next day, Eaton's resignation appeared in the official *Globe*. It was dated before Van Buren's, as though he took the initiative:

I entered your Cabinet . . . contrary to my wishes, and, having nothing to desire either as . . . regards myself or friends, have ever since cherished a determination to avail myself of the first favorable moment . . . to retire. . .

The President answered this seemingly sincere note equally sincerely. By his punctuation he created a ready-made jest for the opposition:

I cannot consent to retain you contrary to your wishes, and your inclination to remain. . . . Go where you will, or be your destiny, what it may, my best wishes will always attend you . . .

This correspondence, the second of the series, was more succinct and seemed more straightforward. Van Buren's resignation was complicated by his confession that he was a candidate for the Presidency, but Eaton's was definite withdrawal.

So Eaton started the resignations! Well, he had sufficient cause. Any other man in his position would have resigned long ago, whatever his wife's wishes, they said, forgetting that they subscribed punctiliously to their wives' wishes in this all-important matter. They gave Eaton too much credit, for Van Buren and Jackson had planned the whole thing on one of their morning rides, and Eaton had agreed, most amenably. Mrs. Eaton, all were to learn, had not been so amenable.

Even the *National Intelligencer* reluctantly admitted that Eaton's letter was less ambiguous than Van Buren's,

but it abstains from any allusion to the probable cause which *really* induced his retirement, and to which public opinion *naturally* attributes the breaking up of the Cabinet. . . .

Nineteenth century journalism, with ponderous phrases, took the longest way to the point. Woman had no place in manning the ship of state. Therefore she was not to be named but indirectly. Innuendo was a womanly weapon, so its use was permissible and all-too-prevalent in italics. Reticence in regard to women, in print, was real. To ladies, papers were respectful. Their treatment of Peggy was to be the glaring exception of the half-century. But before they got ready to use Peggy's name, their method was to strike at her through criticism of her husband and official friends—like the President and Van Buren, whose letter of resignation they literally tore to pieces, searching, like bloodhounds, for her scent.

With patronage, the *Delaware Journal* struck at Peg through speculation on Eaton's sincerity about office:

Perhaps he has indeed provided so well for his friends that he has nothing to desire for *them*. All his father-in-law's family has been lodged in warm places in the public crib by his influence. . . .

That meant Peggy's influence. She wished her relatives in office, and presto! they were placed. The Spoils System was a sore spot

with citizens. Bad enough when politicians used it for purposes of office, but it rankled doubly when used by an unofficial, feminine factor.

All in all, Eaton appeared in the resignations in a more favorable light than Van Buren. But where was Mrs. Eaton? Still she was not in evidence. Washington was puzzled. She had always been put forward by the President. Now she was shielded, more by fear than by favoritism. Any editor, even anti-Administration, would become a traitor to the whole United States and shame his country before the world, did he dare so much as associate Mrs. Eaton's name with the President or politics. Peggy was safe for a while—at least until some sheet willingly assumed the traitorous martyrdom.

Philadelphia, one day by stage and boat from the Capital, was the first city of size to hear of the catastrophe.

The editor of the *United States Gazette* there was not more surprised than his readers when he awoke on April 21st to find a postscript in his paper containing the news. He explained that he

left the office at the usual hour, and shortly after midnight, the paper went to press. Between 1 and 2 o'clock, Mr. Sanderson, of the Coffee House, arrived in the steam boat from Baltimore, and brought the news. He came over to the office, stopped the press, and in the absence of compositors "set up" the "postscript," took out an anecdote, relocked the form, and allowed the press men again to proceed . . .

A day later the New York *Advertiser* excitedly editorialized that upon receipt of the late news from Washington, there was as much excitement as if a ship had arrived in fifteen days from Liverpool, bringing intelligence that all the rotten boroughs in England had been annihilated, France had established a republic with Lafayette as President, the Poles had conquered Russia, flour had fallen a dollar a barrel, and cotton had risen sixpence a pound!

The excitement was appreciably augmented when letters, the only means of communication newspapers then had, were pelted



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PEGGY CAUSES A CABINET CRASH

President Jackson, in this contemporary cartoon called "The Rats Leaving a Falling House," many thousands of which sold throughout the country in the weeks following the dissolution of his Cabinet, watches Eaton, Branch, Van Buren and Ingham (left to right) slink away. His foot on Van Buren's tail

provinceward from Washington with the information that the resignations of Branch and Ingham were required by the President following the voluntary ones of his personal pet, Eaton, and political successor, Van Buren.

Of the correspondence between the different ministers and the President, newspapers professed to make nothing out except that the two dismissed Secretaries explicitly placed theirs directly to the demand of Jackson. There must be another cause, which no one has mentioned in letters, thoughtful citizens claimed. The *National Journal* reported that

The President and his Secretaries have completely mystified the nation.

And so it seemed, despite the Allegory. Mrs. Eaton's name was not obtruded because she had mystified all Washington. Editors at pivotal points knew of her but couldn't print anything—yet.

With unctuous unanimity, Jackson papers endorsed Cabinet changes, believing it all for the best. The *Cincinnati Advertiser*, dealing in personalities, praised Eaton's resignation because it

must promote the interests of the country and the harmony of the Administration. . . .

Precisely, rumbled opposition papers, wherein were gathering threatening allusions. Major Eaton's resignation was certainly required for harmony, long ere this, but who caused the cacophony? This they demanded in accelerated pitch as each day passed. Citizens talked of nothing else. Bets were made on best offered reasons. The *Norfolk Herald's* editor conjectured, in answer to the "all-engrossing topic", that

the apple of discord was thrown into the Cabinet at the moment it was formed.

Apple of discord! The editor evidently meant to infer publicly that there was an Eve. Though Peggy was not named, only inti-

mated, papers were priming themselves for the inevitable pounce on their prey.

Sir Charles saw it, too. In sending all the printed correspondence to Palmerston, he observed that

the manner in which the reluctance of these ministers to resign was got over by the President, confirms what the suspicion which I stated in a former dispatch, that dissensions amongst the members of the Cabinet on private grounds had an influence in bringing about the event which was so long in agitation, though so unexpected when it happened . . .

Daily, the papers were given a single letter of resignation. In dribblets, the whole story filtered to the public. No wonder they mulled over every phrase, and made mince-meat of the reasons given for the dissolution. The letters were ignored, or ridiculed, and for one the *New York Commercial Advertiser* commented that

the notes of these dying swans are certainly some of their sweetest and best.

So while some editors eulogized the notes as symphonies of regretful, parting sorrow, while some grandiosely luxuriated in historical allusions to Roman and English history and others gravely discussed the required resignations from the metaphysical altitude of "the vexed question of free will and necessity," the plain people on city streets and country corners were asking themselves: What caused it? Slowly, a suspicion was born. If even papers of the opposite party could name no object for the Cabinet dissolution, there was but one image that could swell upon the mind. The form was feminine, the features, as yet, indistinct.

Perhaps the least disturbed, the least dismayed, and the least distracted editor in the entire country was he of the *Courrier des Etats-Unis*, a French publication, who gave readers a brief notice of the resignations and devoted a full page to a study of the author of the Waverley novels and a rhapsodic essay on Paganini. Ah yes, he did add once: "*Ces ministres doivent cependant continuer de*

remplir leurs fonctions jusqu' à ce qu'une nouvelle administration puisse être formée." (These ministers, meanwhile, must continue to fulfill their duties until a new administration can be formed.)

He might have added: *cherchez la femme.*

While cold April showers were bringing the tall poplar trees to an early blight, Peggy Eaton, *la femme fatale*, the basic cause of this newspaper storm although her name was not yet mentioned, sat in her home enveloped in gloom. They had pulled the ground from under her feet. There was nothing left to fight for. Like that other spring when Timberlake died, like that other April when she mourned her first child's death, she shut herself up to struggle with her disappointment alone.

Well she knew the final torrents of abuse would flow virulently toward her: statesmen would get the blunt downpour; she was destined, magnet-like, to attract the stabs of thunder.

Peg's deepest mortification came that Jackson, whose war of the masses against the classes was the one she also waged, should have acknowledged defeat on the feminine flank. At least that was what they would say he did by dismissal.

Eaton, on the other hand, seemed relieved, and mended rapidly. Society visualized their early return to his home in Tennessee, and thought the Capital would be well rid of her. They forgot that Washington was Peg's home. Her roots were in tavern talk and party strife—meat and drink of political flavor without which she could not be happy. "It is hoped, on her husband's going out of office, she would have left the city, *but she will not. . .*"

The Comédie Humaine had only just begun. Pompadour Peg had pleased the President and would stay even after counsellors had been crushed on her account.

2.

Though Peg's power was still evident, her person was not. She remained in strict seclusion.

What worried Washington more than anything else was Mrs. Eaton's social retirement and silence, her apparent retrenchment. It knew her capacity for caricature, her ability to deflect an insult with a *bon mot*. It neither knew nor liked her quietus, despite her defeat. No one regretted the end of her unofficial reign. Thirteen men in the War Department, however, poured out their "emotion and regret" at Eaton's departure.

Even hostile papers printed this testimonial of regard with especial emphasis on the "truth of the tribute paid to the *personal* deportment of Mr. Eaton." There was something ominous in their usage of *official* and *personal*, italics surcharged with dynamite. Everyone in the city believed the "Eaton malaria" effectively, if not finally, checked by the mere banishment of germ-center and victims. The sooner Mrs. Eaton left the city, the better for all concerned. If she stayed around and stuck to her guns, someone would have to open fire to annihilate her position with the President.

The *Telegraph* was the logical cannon. But it was, meanwhile, quiescent.

The *National Journal* attributed Duff's silence on Mrs. Eaton's agency in the Administration debacle to the fact that

he didn't know what to say yet

and since its actions for Clay competed with his for Calhoun, both were biding their time before adding fuel to the inevitable bonfire.

The *Globe* went serenely on its way announcing new appointments of the President, while ex-Cabinet ministers were busy disposing of their household furniture and discharging, though with dubious interest, department duties until successors arrived.

There was preoccupation with May Balls. The one given by Monsieur Carusi had as an inviolable instruction that "gentlemen cannot be permitted to dance in boots or frock coats." While gentlemen in the Capital took meticulous pains with their costumes that the hearts of the fair might flutter at the May frolics, the *Journal of Commerce* in New York, a self-righteous Church paper which

even refused theatrical advertising, printed a single-sentence dispatch from its Washington correspondent which experienced politicians recognized as declaration of war against Peggy:

The Magician (Van), as keen-scented as a hound, smelled game, and pursued it with inimitable accuracy, until he found it in the very *heart* of the President.

At that, Mrs. Eaton's real friends lost heart and her enemies became emboldened. Her notoriety, patently, would soon become national. This sentence confirmed in print that there was a woman in the Cabinet case—a woman in some way so close to the President's heart that she had been used by an astute politician. God save the Union! The President, for a pretty woman, had probably betrayed it. Jackson cohorts could not believe it. They would wait for evidence. Soon there was all too much mention and identification of Peg.

Dismissed Cabinet ministers launched their own campaign. They were going to force the President's hand. By implying a personal influence behind the White House, they would make him admit Peggy's existence—personally.

Branch published a letter in the *Raleigh Star* pressing the President to own Peggy's authority as an agency in the Administration:

. . . Dismissed officers have faithfully discharged their respective duties (but that was not enough). . . . *The American People have a right to know the whole truth:* from whence the alleged discord originated . . .” Personally, he “*went as far as a man of honor could go* in endeavouring to promote a good understanding and a cordial, official co-operation with all the members of the Cabinet. But it seems, *I was expected to go still further;* and not doing so, it has been held *good cause for my dismissal* . . .”

Peggy was not named directly in his letter, but held up as a “malign influence.” Thus did a man of honor kindle the flame of crucifixion in a woman's dishonor. But Branch was not alone in scattering faggots.

For the next day, Mr. Ingham averred through the *American Sentinel* that

the *official* intercourse of the Heads of Departments . . . has never . . . been interrupted for a moment, nor has any difference of opinion, as to the measures of the government, divided the Cabinet in a single instance.

Officially, he intimated, all was well, but unofficially. . . .

What was this, what was this? So the swan were geese, and cackling over the country's farmyard—just like the hens! This concerted action by ex-Cabinet ministers to start citizens' conjecture was on a par with whispered ladylike rumor (My dear, you know, there *is* a woman. . . .)

Traditional Jackson papers rallied to Peg's defense and admitted that the "people have a right to know the whole truth," as Branch declared in his half-statements. With withering sarcasm, they wished to know "how far a man of honor could go." They were soon to see.

Anti-Jackson papers sang the antiphonal refrain. Duff Green, the original detractor, leapt on the bandwagon with a loud huzzah! Here was his chance to tell all he knew, from the inside out. If ex-Cabinet ministers took the responsibility, he'd let the *Telegraph* be their outlet. He got in touch with Branch and corralled another letter. This stressed the Cabinet differences, not on official business, but on the "*social*" end. Mr. Green editorially opined that it was his purpose

. . . to lay all the facts before the people. It is no longer a private affair; *it is public*, and will form an important part of the future history of the Republic.

He felt justified in joining Peggy's name to the nebulous portrait already filmed over keen eyes.

Sir Charles Vaughan, who was leaving Washington for London that day, was sorry to see that the subject of Mrs. Eaton, though not yet her identification, had become public property. It was rather

infra dig for Cabinet ministers to exploit a woman's power in the political world. But hadn't the President, in his farewell speech to him, admitted "favorable impressions derived from personal intercourse, official as well as social" (indirect public thanks for his unprejudiced hospitality to Peggy). And hadn't Sir Charles himself chosen, at his Farewell Dinner, to toast "The Fair"? In the jolly political game one rule obtained rigorously—never contaminate the hand which fed you. Both Branch and Ingham had been brought to the Cabinet only by Eaton's suggestion, and now that they were ousted, repaid him by castigating his wife, and incidentally insuring her a place in American history. How stupid! Where was their long-time vision? One trouble with the Constitution was the rapid turn-over of the Presidential office. It was too bad. The dignity of the nation was neglected in favor of party power.

Sir Charles was to see, on his journey north to set sail, that Branch's letters made the public, once aware, hurl back to Washington cries which no Sovereign would ever stand. Free America was not free of a woman's influence behind the Chief Magistrate's Chair? This is a democracy and all have a right to know their real rulers. If a woman controlled the President, she in turn controlled the public. *Who* was this woman? And *why* was she the power that she was? It was high time the public knew. Explanations were demanded.

Up in Connecticut, where Puritan life still feared the Devil more than God was loved, and where an immoral woman was now a substitute for the frenzy which once went to witches, the direct accusation against Peg first came.

The *Connecticut Herald* wondered

. . . what motive could have induced the President . . . to cast aside "his whole Cabinet? . . ." Wonderful as it may seem, it was a *woman*. The Hero, whom the veterans of Waterloo could not conquer . . . has been . . . debased to most ignoble purposes by one of those *courteous* pieces of mortality

whose "*name is frailty!*" We can therefore expect no "explanations" from the President upon this subject. . . .

It was up to someone else to explain insinuations to the public. The Secretary of the Hartford Convention . . . solicited in earnest terms that the ex-Secretaries tell the whole truth. Giving them the keynote, he asked if

the Administration had been ruled by a *Madame Pompadour* or a *Duchess duBarry*?

At that, the *Globe*, which had been issued bi-weekly, became a daily. It evidently had orders to fight for Peggy to the finish. Too, Major Mordecai Noah, the famous Jew who tried to assemble his brethren for a new Zion at Niagara Falls, countered through the *New York Courier and Enquirer*, for he was Peggy's friend, that he

understood . . . the allusions to DuBarry, and so does the public . . . The person . . . *infamously* compared to a Pompadour or a DuBarry, has never mingled in public affairs (oh, no!) or attempted to control the measures of the Administration. An object of envy and jealousy among a certain class of scandalous *coteries* of Washington, she has resented with becoming indignation, the attempts to defame her reputation for political purpose and to destroy her domestic comfort, and the character of her offspring. The woman thus compared to the vile Pompadour is an *American female* . . . a wife and a mother . . . the wife of an amiable and estimable man, of honorable, sensitive and high minded feelings . . . the mother of several young children . . . a woman of excellent heart . . . devoid of pride or ostentation . . . a friend of the poor and comfortless, mingling her tears with her charities to the afflicted. . . . Such a woman is selected by the enemies of the present Administration . . . dragged before the public . . . slandered and vilified, to sustain an unholy war against patriotism and fidelity. . . . If the wife of any member of the Cabinet dare have an opinion, or express that opinion on public affairs, she is to be surrounded by spies, denounced to the public and compared to the infamous courtesans of the time of Louis XIV. and XV. We blush for the degeneracy of the age, for our own countrymen, for honor, chivalry, and sentiment.

Once again, there was agreement: everyone was blushing and pink paper editions should have been the vogue. Both sides smelled

to heaven in their hypocrisy about a woman's part in politics. High-minded men, at last relating Mrs. Eaton to the government, wrote column upon column on her place in the Administration.

Unblushing analogies to monarchical misalliances monopolized newspapers. One manly editor from Portland, (Me.), in a full page article, made public confession that he

would be the last to invade . . . domestic life, and exhibit a female of high rank, . . . in a light the least unfavorable, except that the President has been made the dupe of the strategem . . . concerning a *lady*, and an instrument to inflict vengeance on those who combined to neglect her.

The spirits of the departed illustrious Presidents were called upon to witness this state of things in the "first century of republican existence," and the courageous spirit of President Jackson was admired in some quarters or in others condoned, castigated, anathemized and excoriated according to the vitality of the writer's pen and the virility of his person.

But everyone, all over the country, acknowledged that "the scales can no longer adhere to the public eye": all knew that there was an American Pompadour. What did it matter that the editor of the Hagerston (Md.) *Mail* said that Peggy was

an amiable, friendly, charitable character . . . an affectionate wife and a kind mother, but she has her foes, her *envious* foes, yet she has her friends, friends, firm, true and sincere, who will not allow her to be traduced and calumniated without coming . . . to her defence.

Peggy was Pompadour to the public. She had her pedestal: "The American Pompadour."

Eaton poisons polluted the river politic. All who drank of it imbibed germs of the Pompadour fever. Ex-Cabinet ministers acted in alchemistic roles trying to transmute the Peggy-alloy to pure gold of public favor for themselves.

Branch, always the weakest member of the Cabinet, in the

President's words, "made haste to leave the day before" another of his exposes reached the Capital. Branch was "... the greatest cause in estranging Emily and Andrew from me . . . Andrew is with me, and I hope his eyes are beginning to be opened that old friends never ought to be abandoned for new ones!"

Donelson's eyes were being opened wider than ever, but in far different fashion than his important Uncle wished. At this time, he admitted to his wife, still in the fastness of Tennessee, that his conversations concerning her return to the White House had "not been as satisfactory as I had hoped. I will be slow to adopt the belief that my refusal to make terms with Mrs. Eaton has been treated as a state affair, which nothing short of banishment from the White House can atone for."

Donelson's sluggish, deliberative mind must have made him feel, however, that his own position at the White House was not secure, if his Uncle discovered that his political as well as social sympathies were aligned with the enemy. For while Branch's letters were being annotated or abjured by party papers, Donelson was warning that ex-Cabinet minister, safe at home in South Carolina, to write him "under cover of Dr. Bradford." Further, he suggested that Branch be quiet. Eaton and Van Buren, he advised, might seem to gain by the resignation arrangement but soon they would have to show their real reasons for leaving the Cabinet willingly. Ingham, Berrien and Branch, on the other hand, were dismissed and had no motives. "They are on the offensive, you . . . on the defensive. . . . Do not overlook this. . . ."

But it was to be reversed entirely because Peggy, in her public defense, characteristically took the offensive, launching a Jugger-naut which all but overcame her.

As Andrew Donelson wrote profusely to Branch, he didn't know that there was being enacted not far from the White House a skirmish which has made its mark on history not by anything said, but by all left unsaid.

President Jackson and Mr. Van Buren, before the latter's depar-

ture for New York, preparatory to filling the mission of Ambassador to England, followed the diagonal path up Pennsylvania Avenue to pay a call on Mrs. Eaton. How many times before, in hours of trouble, the President had traced steps to the home of Mrs. O'Neale, who always gave him warm welcome and quiet understanding. But this time he received a different reception from her daughter.

Pens which had been worn thin by letter-writers and editors in tracing impressive innuendoes about the President and his Pompadour would have fallen from astonished hands had their guides witnessed the distant demeanor, the reserved conversation between herself and the Chief Executive.

Before the great mirrors, between the two Greek vases, framed like a figure on a frieze, Peg stood in silence, receiving them. Her frigid manner, where before had been such abundant verve, fluid mimicry, lightness and love of life, mystified the "little Magician" (Van), who later recorded in his autobiography that sufficient time had elapsed to make her aware of her ex-officio position. He noted that her "coolness was directed mainly to the General," who, when he mentioned it as they left, shrugged his shoulders and said: "Strange."

What was strange only was that Andrew Jackson should not have realized that the torrents of public abuse, which had extinguished his beloved backwoods Rachel, had congealed to a proud insolence in more worldly, pretty Peg, while within her heart was being distilled bitterness, drop by drop.

She stood immobile while her two best friends walked away. Roused suddenly to resentment that they hadn't comprehended her controlled composure, she rushed to the window to shut out sight of their backs. In her hurry, she crashed a plant to the floor. Again an earth mould shattered, the sod scattered, the plant uprooted! This impact made further impassivity impossible. Down with the defensive; onward to action!

To ladies who looked on in the Capital arena, Peg was to seem

more the bristling bull than the bovine cow. She now courted antagonism; it was no accident.

Neither the President nor Peggy knew that just a few days later, Captain Vanderbilt's steamship "Andrew Jackson" would be wrecked on the Hudson, and that his other boat, "Bellona," would not be allowed to land. To the political world, the loss of life in this accident was only second to the gleeful fact that another Andrew Jackson craft ran afoul. The steamboat disaster seemed subservient to the significance editors drew from the case. As they labelled it "Another Andrew Jackson Explosion," or "Bellona Barred from Shore," they didn't know that the private friendship between those two famous public personages had struck an iceberg impasse.

3.

May's chill mellowed to June's sudden warmth. With the swollen atmosphere, her enemies' passions burst the bonds of restraint. And Peggy Eaton . . . the bonds of silence. Never having practiced female resignation before, her temper got the best of her. She decided to go in for journalism herself. Newspaper discussion about her got on her nerves. Only a duel could satisfy her pent-up fury at the protracted fumbling to get her name before the public. Her hand, and only her hand, could have been behind the blustering which appeared in the *Globe*, her journalistic outlet, the first weekend in June. Eaton without her instigation would have been more temperate:

In two different letters, written evidently for publication, Mr. Branch has covertly . . . made injurious intimations. . . . Why does he not act like a man? (Peggy was alive again!) He has been called upon to come out openly . . . to specify . . . to assume the responsibility of showing that which he says *ought to be known*, but which he has . . . ventured to disseminate through vague insinuations alone . . .

Peggy wanted open warfare now that she was fighting men. She was tired of italics. They could not be denied. Like Jackson, she thought real men dealt in duels, or facts. The facts were simple

enough. Let ex-Cabinet ministers tell the country if they would that Jackson's manly defense of her arose from memory of the slander which killed his wronged wife. Let them say that, as Eaton's most intimate friend, he protected that name, just as Eaton had helped him protect his own. Let them even say that he refused to allow those he considered in no way her betters to boycott her. And let them, if they would state it correctly, even say that he loved her, and that she adored him. He was her true friend, and Jackson loved his friends, simply, sincerely. Let them say anything, anything concrete to dispel this vaporizing.

If this had been a paid advertisement signed by John Henry Eaton, no one could have been more certain that the whole statement emanated directly from Peggy. It flashed upon Washington that Mrs. Eaton's resilience must have reasserted itself. In brandishing his gauntlet, Eaton automatically flourished her glove. It was evident that a campaign was to be executed, and that somebody's life, no matter whose, hung in the balance. Now Peggy was out for scalps.

The *National Journal*, with sardonic appreciation of Peggy's onslaught, was in a

state of trembling solicitude as to the fate of Mr. Branch. Why this looks amazingly like a direct challenge! Our own notions are perhaps somewhat antiquated, but we had, in our simplicity, imagined that there was a feminine allusion in the innuendos of the thinking ex-Secretary (Branch) . . . and it may perhaps be surmised by some, that this vapouring and challenging through the medium of the public newspapers, *is* somewhat womanish. To our eyes, however, it seems to wear all the threatening aspect of the *Great God of War*. Be it Mars, or be it Bellona, we would not give much for the chance of Mr. Branch; and we mean, as soon as we recover from our trepidation, to write an obituary notice in advance, so as to have it ready when the fatal calamity occurs. We respectfully solicit materials for his life and history, from any of his friends who may happen to know anything of him *worth recording*. . . .

Branch was a few days later to write Donelson, excitedly, still under cover of Dr. Bradford, that he had "received from John H.

Eaton one of his papers (*Globe*) containing the piece with his frank but no commentary. . . . My first impression was to return the paper to Eaton with this endorsement: *John H. Eaton, Compl. vs. John Branch, Def., the Def. Ready for trial* . . . will you contrive some means for its insertion in the *Telegraph*, I want your advice." He got both advice and action.

While the President's organ was issuing authorized statements for Eaton and Peggy, the President's trusted nephew and private secretary contrived to fulfill Branch's suggestion for a piece in the *Telegraph*. Sure enough, a week after the printed challenge, Duff wrote two important looking columns demanding:

Does the individual who *authorized* this publication suppose that it will be a substitute for a duel, or a verdict of a jury? Would the individual in question put a good name, which should be dearer than life, on such an issue? . . .

Duff forgot his own appeal to Minister Campbell, only two years before, not to bring Peggy's name into court, but then, two years is a long time in political calendars. By the end of his article, he left her good name dragging. He told how the President had gone so far as to get a "distinguished member of Congress" to call on deposed Cabinet ministers to recognize Peggy, but that they refused.

All know that there is no process by which the evidence upon which society acts, can be forced into a newspaper discussion.

Nevertheless he proceeded to do the impossible, with the explanation that he was

driven only to a reluctant discharge of a painful duty. Were we to remain silent, it would confirm the influence which it is our duty to combat—an influence which seeks to undermine our free institutions; and, by using the power and patronage of the Government, to corrupt our public as well as our private morals.

But Duff was not the only Washington writer who had convinced himself that he was destined to play the prophet in the Revelations from the Federal Mount, whose unwritten commandment, stricturing all ex-Secretaries, seemed to be "Thou shalt not tell . . . all . . . *at once*."

The day before Eaton's challenge appeared, the *Journal of Commerce* correspondent wrote apropos of the people's inability to completely solve the dissolution riddle:

The secret lies in this: no one has told me the whole truth. The people have yet to learn many important matters before they can rightly understand why one of the high and responsible departments of the Government should be so degraded. I shall bear a little longer, hoping that some of the noble actors will see that they owe it to the country and to their own character to deal honestly with the people and tell the whole truth. It is in vain to attempt to conceal it. It must and shall be told. I have the whole in my power, and under the authority of public opinion, I will bring everyone from the highest to the lowest to the bar of the people.

When Eaton's challenge came out, this blackmailing correspondent could bear it no longer, or perhaps he felt that his scoop was no longer safe, for he exploded: "I have been thinking today, a little history might have a better effect, and therefore I will raise the veil a little higher."

Then he proceeded lengthily to describe how in the coolness between the President and Vice-President:

"Van Buren was the contriver, Mr. Crawford, Mr. Forsyth, Mr. Hamilton and Major Lewis, his agents, and Major Eaton, Mrs. Eaton, and Major Barry, his auxiliaries"; that at a White House levee, he saw Mr. Calhoun "as usual, unsuspecting, animated, gay and social . . . seated on a sofa with the President, apparently absorbed in confidential communication." At the same time, he noted "Van Buren, Eaton, Barry, Lewis and Mrs. Eaton, *toe to toe*, forming a whispering coterie by the fire . . ."

He continued, recounting pre-Inauguration expostulations against Eaton's appointment, the President's persistence in naming him,

the consequent Social War, the agency of Dr. Ely in bringing lewd charges, and that of Dr. Campbell at the Cabinet conference in meeting them. He told how Emily Donelson was driven from the White House, how Jackson's enmity to Calhoun culminated in the rupture, and how the Cabinet was dismissed—all on Mrs. Eaton's account.

To mention a woman's name in a newspaper in 1830 was to make her famous—or infamous. Overnight, Peggy became the notorious Mrs. Eaton.

Peg was to have her pillory as well as her pedestal. The flood-gates of detraction being opened by this publication on the eighth of June, the country was in a state of consternation at the machinations of its mighty lawmakers, the mingling of revered religious leaders in this cesspool of statecraft, and the secret struggles of its supreme society. But what most impressed it was that Mrs. Eaton's name was coupled with men in political influence and conference. That shocked the established sense of sex-propriety. How dare a woman arrogate unto herself powers that belonged to the citizen body at large at the polls!

To editors who had been groping in the dimness of veiled statements, this sundering of the stage curtain, this showing-up of the actors and actions behind the scenes was an *éclaircissement* indeed, as one paper exclaimed with relief. The whole article, or such part of it considered sufficiently diluted for local consumption, was reprinted with vituperative apostrophes against Presidential absolutism which would force a fallen female on society.

A few, a very few editors, refused to reprint the facts at all, since they were disparaging to democracy. Among these, nobly enough, was the editor of the *National Journal*, whose columns for two years past had offered anonymously the most putrid playlets, poems, essays and diatribes on Bellona and DuBarry. He refrained

from giving the facts which it developed, further publicity. (Evidently he preferred the fancies.) He admitted, however, that he "had long since heard,

from authentic sources, *all* the statements which it contains, and can anything be more disparaging to our national politics, than that a development of the causes of a public transaction, cannot be made without offending the *cheek of modesty?*" (The italics, for once, are the author's.)

Other papers found other ways of confirming without reprinting a fact. The *Richmond Whig* vouched that

its truth is notorious at Washington . . . that it has been, for eighteen months, the theme of general conversation, of indignant amazement, and of painful regret, in all the circles of that city . . . that Jackson members of Congress have openly . . . stigmatized it . . . that the delicacy thrown over the subject, by the sex of some of the parties, has alone prevented it from being made a topic in the public prints. It has come out at last, properly come out, and we shall see how the partisans of the President will meet or evade a charge which they can neither repel nor admit.

The President's organ, the *Globe*, not only repelled, but made the *Journal of Commerce* repellent by saying that it had "a very proper man for its Washington correspondent . . . a poor, irresponsible . . . scribbler, who for five dollars a week, does all the dirty work of defamation. . . . If the *Journal of Commerce* hopes to dupe the public through such a foul source, . . . it *dupes* itself."

Perhaps the *Globe* was duping itself, for the circulation of the *Journal of Commerce* jumped almost a hundred per cent, and the editor was obliged to announce that he couldn't print enough copies to supply the demand.

As this became manifest, the editor of the *New York Enquirer*, Major Noah, who had defended Mrs. Eaton at the first mention of Pompadour, admitted that the same Washington Correspondent had written for his paper for a few months in 1829. To show his "hypocritical principles" and "ambidexterous position," he would print "portions of his unpublished letters to show his duplicity," since only one-fifth of his communications achieved print. One was particularly pertinent. It was written during the Senate investigation into the Timberlake accounts:

We all pity Mr. Eaton sincerely, for this unnecessary and abrupt assault upon his domestic relations [this same correspondent had written]. He is universally kind and benevolent, hospitable and accommodating; and in the manifestations of good-neighborhood feeling, is supported by his wife, with inimitable attractions; she is very handsome, gay, polite, and sensible; and I BELIEVE IN HER CONDUCT PERFECTLY PURE. By her advancement in circumstances and society and the prospect of personal happiness, through her marriage with Mr. Eaton, she has become an object of ENVY, and it seems is to be THE THEME OF SLANDER FOR A WHILE. Her mother is a religious woman, her sisters respectable . . . one the wife of the chief clerk in the War Department . . . the other recently married to a respectable preacher, since a clerk in the Treasury Department.

Man should be paid for his labor, Noah adverted, and "when a man is reduced to the necessity of writing on both sides for a living, we may deplore the circumstances which have led to this humiliation." Having "stripped this correspondent of the *Journal of Commerce* of the hypocritical cloak of patriotism, we leave him to stand before the public in his true light."

The *Journal of Commerce* editor seemed elucidated. Shown the dexterity of his Swiss scribbler, he doubled his salary. After all, this fearless reporter had caused its quotation, pro and con, in every paper in the country. Repercussions were bound to continue. Now that this correspondent coyly admitted having given his readers the whole, everybody knew the other half of the story would be forthcoming by a long-drawn out process of denial. As the *National Journal* said: "The public mind cannot and will not be satisfied on this subject." Certainly not. Why should it? Mrs. Eaton was to be burned in effigy. It was high stakes: the heroine of this pre-tabloid scandal was drawn from the heights of its social hierarchy—an Innkeeper's daughter who became, somehow in this free country, the President's intimate friend.

Practically every paper in the country played up the Peggy exposure. It defended or defamed her, according to its political bias. No editor thought to come to her personally for her side of the

story. A woman was not to mix in such affairs in print, but was to sit on the sidelines. What did it matter that the woman might be spirited, and even feel tempted to do a little dueling herself? Duff Green was the most alluring target for her not-so-imaginary lancet. Eaton was seen buying up all the best pistols in town.

Duff, who was performing the defamation job well, deserved Eaton's disgust. He was brought to Washington by Eaton, set up in the publishing business, awarded the official public printing through Eaton's indefatigable exertion, and was an intimate visitor at the Secretary of War's home. He had even offered the *Telegraph* for their defense when whispered rumors were first spread about them. Now, his paper functioned as chief source of corroboration for the country, for, as Whig editors noted, it had been the Administration organ during this newly-exposed Social War and knew whereof it spoke.

The *Globe* printed the facts of Green's former intimacy with and dependence for financial and official support on Eaton. The *Telegraph* then thundered that it was mostly untrue. Major Eaton did execute a loan for him, Duff admitted. A few weeks since, Eaton had sent him word that the note must be collected. He had notified his clerk "concerned with fiscal affairs" to pay it. He had supposed it taken care of. Today it was paid. He denied that he and his family had "habits of kind and friendly intercourse" with Mrs. Eaton prior to his political *volte face*, and said the relations were only "formal."

As for "calumniating female innocence," he disclaimed that distinction. Anyway, he demanded,

how does the editor of the *Globe* know whether the parties be guilty or innocent? The party may be as innocent as "your baby," and yet it would require just such a witness as he of the *Globe* to prove it. Truly his "*hunting shirt*" must have possessed the peculiar properties of that remarkable mirror in the story of the fair Scherherazade, and this classic editor must have performed a constant *observation* to be qualified for present duty. Save us from such a witness!

Turning prosecutor, he asked pointedly:

Will the *Globe* deny that Mr. Ingham, Gov. Branch, and Mr. Berrien were dismissed because they refused to compel their families to associate with that of Major Eaton?

Will the *Globe* deny that Mr. Van Buren availed himself of that peculiar situation to ingratiate himself into the favor of the President by urging the propriety of their doing so?

Will the *Globe* deny that these gentlemen gave unqualified refusal; and that they, at that time, declared their readiness to give up their respective offices rather than . . . hold them on such a condition?

(Then why the fuss now that they no longer held office? What difference whether they were forced out by Jackson or by their own convictions of purity? One was as moral an egress as the other.)

Duff was abused and denounced, he concluded, because "he would not support female *influence* in the administration of public affairs."

The *Globe* denied absolutely that the President had ever *authorized* officially any member of Congress to intercede with recalcitrant Cabinet ministers for Mrs. Eaton's recognition. Hereafter, it announced, it would have as little to say about the *Telegraph* as of any other opposition paper. But it was a bit too late to ignore it, since the whole country now took its cue from its columns.

The *Telegraph* didn't ignore what the *Globe* said. But Duff wrote one sentence too many that day; for it struck at Peggy:

It is proved that the families of the Secretaries of the Treasury and the Navy, and of the Attorney General, refused to associate with her.

While that sentence seeped deep into the Eatons' systems, the *National Journal* described the growls of accusation and answer in "Green and Blair are raging like two bull-dogs in *la petite guerre*, and after an exclamation of wonder and surprise, we are told by the combatants that it is all about a *woman*."

'How lost Mark Antony the world?
Who was't betrayed the capitol?'"

It added that the "details . . . poured through the press, the still more shocking ones . . . spoken of in private conversations are enough to pollute the public mind. A dangerous stab has been inflicted upon the morals and taste of the community. A new era has arisen in our history."

Peggy was considered a national calamity.

Coincident with publication of these facts, Peggy was referred to with a veil of Elizabethan lustiness. One sheet said:

Eaton, very much flurried at the recent developments . . . looks very *jaded*. Whether this be with fatigue of body or of mind, we leave others to determine. . . . It is said he breathes vengeance and destruction. . . The combat thickens; on ye brave!

It was true. The night the *Telegraph* printed that irretrievable sentence about the refusal to associate with Mrs. Eaton, the whole newspaper discussion became beyond endurance for Peggy and Eaton. They decided to try action. They'd deal directly with ex-Cabinet ministers, not through newspapers.

Eaton demanded, in personal letters to Ingham and Berrien, whether that statement emanated from them, "since it had appeared in a paper . . . friendly to you, and . . . brought forth under your immediate eye. I desire to know whether or not you will sanction or disavow it."

Ingham answered almost immediately, seeming by his coolness ready for encounter. He declared that he had not been able to ascertain . . .

whether it is the *publication* . . . or the *fact* stated in the *Telegraph*, which you desire to know whether I have sanctioned . . . or will disavow. You must be not a little deranged, to imagine that any blustering of yours could

induce me to disavow what all the inhabitants of the city know, and perhaps half the people of the United States believe to be true.

If Eaton's equilibrium was only slightly awry before, it became more than half unbalanced. Immediately, he answered Ingham

I regret to find that to a frank and candid inquiry . . . an answer impudent and insolent is returned. To injury unprovoked, you are pleased to add insult. What is the remedy? I demand of you satisfaction . . . your answer must determine whether you are . . . entitled to the name and character of a gentleman . . . to be able to act like one.

Just before he wrote this note, Eaton resigned as Acting-Secretary of War and was replaced by Dr. Randolph, Peggy's brother-in-law.

Mr. Ingham did act the gentleman. Since it was Saturday night, since he was entertaining guests, since he never worked on Sunday, spending his holy day in meditation, he chose to ignore the note until the new working week. His meditations, however, must have been rudely interrupted and Eaton's impatience prodigious, for on Monday morning he wrote Eaton:

Yesterday morning, your brother-in-law, Dr. Randolph, intruded himself into my room, with a threat of personal violence. I perfectly understand the part you are made to play in the farce now acting before the American people. I am not to be intimidated by threats, or provoked by abuse, to any act inconsistent with the pity and contempt which your condition and conduct inspire.

Immediately upon receipt of this contemptuous note, hardly calculated to inspire abnegation, Eaton lost balance altogether, and himself wrote one sentence too many:

Your note proves . . . that you are quite brave enough to do a mean action, but too great a coward to repair it. Your contempt I heed not; your pity I despise. It is such contemptible fellows as yourself that have set forth rumors of their own creation, and taken them as ground of imputation

against me. If that be good cause, then should you pity yourself, for your wife has not escaped them, and you must know it. . . . But no more; here our correspondence closes. Nothing more will be received short of an acceptance of my demand of Saturday, and nothing more be said by me until face to face we meet. It is not in my nature to brook your insults, nor will they be submitted to.

It was not Peggy's nature, he meant. She needed to strike back.

Ingham, who at first had used contempt to cast off the challenge of a duel, now fortified himself with religious belief that did not countenance the taking of life unnecessarily. He let pass what Eaton said about Mrs. Ingham, but gave Duff Green all the letters from Eaton and copies of his answers. They appeared the next morning.

If Eaton's challenging Branch to a duel through a newspaper was considered "womanish," then Ingham's wriggling out of one through the same medium should look even more ridiculous. Peggy, they whispered, was blood-thirsty. Duels for male satisfaction were permissible but for a questionable woman's honor lawless and ungodly.

Inasmuch as Eaton's combatant in the desired face-to-face meeting did not concur, he had to be corralled. There was a hard day's work of shadowing ahead for the ex-Secretary of War.

Ingham, when he received Eaton's reiterated demand for satisfaction, arranged to leave Washington at once. He had to come to the Treasury Department, however, to complete some final details. Into that government building marched Eaton, Dr. Randolph, Major Lewis, brothers-in-law to Peggy and himself, and several others. Eaton knew Ingham was inside, so lay in wait. Ingham's friends in the halls looked upon this aggregation in alarm and sent word to warn the retiring Secretary of the Treasury ere his emergence. The cortege, meanwhile, had shifted back and forth to a neighboring grocery store so as not to seem too Indian-like in its

immobility . . . or its intentions, for scalps were the premium. Ingham armed and got bodyguard.

Jackson, delighted, sent word, unaware, unto the enemies' camp when he wrote his nephew Donelson, then on his way back to Tennessee, that "Eaton remained there until nearly the hour of closing. . . . As soon as the spies reported, that Eaton had left there Ingham marched forth with his janisaries, who, it is said, had determined when Eaton made the attack to shoot three or seven balls through Eaton. Judge for yourself."

The whole country was to do so before the next day dawned. Before he went to bed, and while "they still paraded until a late hour on the streets near my lodgings, heavily armed, threatening an assault on the dwelling I resided in," Ingham addressed Jackson as "chief magistrate of the United States whose duties in maintaining good order among its inhabitants must not be unknown." He charged that

some officers of the Government near your person and supposed to be in your especial confidence, made an attempt to waylay me . . . for the purpose of assassination. If you have not already been apprised of these movements, you will perhaps be surprised to learn that the persons concerned . . . are the late Secretary of War, the acting Secretary of War, and that the Second Auditor of the Treasury, Register of the Treasury and Treasurer of the United States were in their company. . . .

Ingham didn't dally in the Capital until its delivery, but hired a private stage coach to take him to Baltimore. Like Branch, he fled before betrayal.

Eaton, belatedly informed of Ingham's precipitate departure at dawn, made a fruitless attempt to overtake the early rider, but in vain. As Chief Executive, Jackson acknowledged Ingham's letter of accusation. As himself, he added a devastating postscript: "I would have preferred that this matter should have been examined into face to face and for that purpose sent my messenger for you, but was informed you had left the city at four o'clock A. M."

But if Ingham couldn't be there face to face, his accusation instead vibrated blatantly in the *Telegraph*. "The Kilkenny cats are fairly at it," wrote the *National Journal*. The *Telegraph*, which for weeks had done nothing else but assail a woman undisguisedly, or, as even so impartial a paper as the *National Intelligencer* remarked, "drag a woman through the political Arena," now defended Mrs. Ingham's purity with the same holy zeal which it ridiculed in Blair as witness a few weeks before. Mr. Eaton, however, had the decency to admit in a card published in the *Globe*, that he regretted having made the imputation and that it had been written under indignation. No one exchanged like courtesies for libels on Peggy.

Perhaps the most irrefutable criticism of Eaton's conduct came in the lamentable fact that he had chosen to press his challenge of a duel on the Sabbath, and didn't allow Mr. Ingham the God-given respite of the holy day.

Jackson addressed a surprised letter to each of the accused gentlemen, asking that "to the serious charges contained in Mr. Ingham's letter, which gave me the first information that I have had of the difficulties, I wish you to give a prompt and explicit answer."

Amos Kendall admitted that he walked past Ingham's house with his wife on his arm. He had no designs on Ingham's life, he assured Jackson solemnly, and "neither did my wife." Other gentlemen each explicitly denied participation in any assassination attempt. They had merely walked with Eaton, who deplored that such an appeal was necessary sometimes in private life.

Though Eaton acted the gentleman in his apologies and explanations, Duff Green called his challenge for something said in his newspaper "an attack on the liberty of the press" and then prostituted that inviolate liberty to a licentious point. Partisan Administration papers sneered at Ingham's "cold-blooded and cowardly conduct." Some said if the truth were known, Eaton's forbearance would be admired, and Brigadier-General Coffee wrote Jackson:

I see that my friend Eaton is acting himself, now that he is not shackled with office. This is what I expected, of him. It is right, and just what every honest, independent man, who will take the trouble to think for himself will approve of. At suitable season, I expect he will go the whole hog round, but he ought not to press it too fast, times and circumstances will offer when all will come on by accident, as it were.

But the opposition papers saw no accident in the matter, for the tenor of their grief at the exhibitions made by the great men at the seat of Government was "woe to our country, woe!"

The *National Journal*, which still had apprehensions of shocking its readers' delicacy by printing too much, gives the best picture of the scene in Washington:

Threats . . . applicable to more than one individual, have been for days in circulation through the town, and armed men have been seen in positions justifying the belief that they were watching for opportunities to assault their antagonists. Is the country to sink with these braggarts to the depths of degradation? Are our streets and the departments, and the President's House, to be made the scenes of combat and brutal warfare? What is there of the lofty tone of chivalry in the vulgar ribaldry exhibited? It would disgrace in manner, in feeling, in expression, the purlieu of Billingsgate.

Even impartial papers temperately admitted that "such scenes do no credit to the country." There was quibbling on "offensive" and "defensive." Diatribes against dueling were offered by honest editors, as well as those seconding Mr. Ingham's thrusts. Eaton was denounced with malevolent delight as merely proving to the world by his aggression that the charges against his wife were true. Peggy had tried action to reaction against her, as ever.

It had a monarchial smell—duels in a woman's name! Duels of other days were discussed: Decatur's, Randolph's and Clay's—all manly.

Meanwhile, far from the hair-trigger pistols of Eaton, Mr. Ingham made an after-dinner speech, at a welcoming-home party

in Pennsylvania, that pivoted public attention. It was the last sentence which rang in the ears of his countrymen, who listened with anxious antennae:

The attempt was to compel me and my family to associate with a woman whom the respectable society of that city had deemed unworthy of such countenance. I resisted this attempt, and this is the complaint of Mr. Eaton, for which he sought my life.

Of course, blood went high, and Jackson had to dismiss Dr. Randolph as a result of the cry "let him be stricken from the rolls!" Despite dismissal, resentment still simmered. The *Globe* reflected that the country had witnessed concretely that "lack of harmony" which really existed. Everyone could but agree that Jackson was quite correct in dissolving his Cabinet. Good riddance, altogether. Perhaps Blair thought such a course would quiet rancorous opprobrium rebounding shuttle-wise between ex-Cabinet ministers. Daily, new charges were catapulted. The gravest to be faced was that the President had full knowledge of the assassination affair BEFORE any letters of protest were written. Enemies and friends alike recollected with a shudder that Jackson had not hesitated to shoot a man who slandered his wife long before he even thought of the Presidential chair.

That no blood had been actually shed was overlooked in the outcry. Naturally, anger was aroused that in a free country such desperados should be in high office. More sophisticated gentlemen wrote anonymous letters to the papers. One "Hortensius" said that

we have our Caesar and our Pompey, . . . it appears, we also have our Cleopatra.

Others, comparing the late quarrels to the Trojan War, wanted to know truly if the modern Helen was so fair? But there were no elders to settle the question.

While criticism mounted, the *Scotsman*, a favorite foreign publi-

cation, arrived. All were amused when the leading article admired the American Government because:

it has never shed a drop of blood, nor banished a single individual for State crimes! . . . I am delighted to find that the more popular a government grows, the more mild it becomes . . .

As this glowed in approval, an Englishman in Washington had occasion to administer less applause. Charles Bankhead, British Secretary and Vaughan's assistant, wrote Palmerston that

public attention has been much engaged in the last ten days with a correspondence between the late Secretaries of War and the Treasury. . . . A rupture between these two gentlemen ended in a challenge . . . refused by Ingham . . . a very violent correspondence took place on the subject. However, it is of so personal a nature and of an interest so local, that I do not think it necessary to trouble your Lordship with a copy of it.

(Bankhead, the husband of Peg's firmest woman friend, had good reason, too. For the *Telegraph* barked in some of those issues:

Will the *Globe* deny that the President visited the lady of the British Secretary of Legation as a special mark of respect, and in return for the attention paid by that lady to Mrs. Eaton?)

Equally laconic and deprecatory was Peggy. She was back in form with a *bon mot*. While the country was clamorous with cries of "petticoat government" which could not be crushed, or even conciliated by anything the President could do, Mrs. Eaton volunteered of the Bucks County Brave, Ingham: "All he needs is petticoats."

4.

The Fourth of July fired the free blood of American citizenry. It was traditional that criticism or congratulation come then to the comparatively new government. Men celebrated a real Revolu-

tionary victory still. Anything which impaired liberty was denounced.

Independence Day celebrations gave every freeman his chance. On his country's birthday, let each man use his birthright. His fireworks sent sky-rocketing that season were almost exclusively confined to the ever-fresh subject of the Cabinet's dissolution, and to the woman who, whatever contradictions, he was convinced had caused it. Peggy bore the brunt of his resentment. Let him roast himself as he guzzled food and drink and toasted.

Mr. James Young, at the National Republican celebration in Washington, a "festival characterized by hilarity, good feelings and good order, and without a single unpleasant incident," drank to "Mrs. Donelson, Mrs. Calhoun, Mrs. Ingham and Mrs. Branch, the female phalanx that resisted the introduction of European court morals under General Jackson; their example is of more value than the defense of 'Beauty and Booty' at New Orleans!"

Dr. McWilliams: "Mrs. Donelson! Her example and unyielding propriety. Marble is too fragile to inscribe them on!"

John Ellis: "The serpent beguiled the woman—the woman beguiled the Cabinet."

General assembly toasts were made to the ladies of Washington in "their defense of the purity of their sex should be recorded in letters of gold, for the use of future generations," and to the "Next Cabinet—May they all be bachelors—or leave their wives at home!"

Philadelphians cavilled, too, at Musical Fund Hall. Arose Mr. B. Tevis to toast "The matrons and daughters of our country—they, too, are free, proud only of their virtue and innocence, they would not compromise these for all the grandeur and glory of a Cleopatra."

Mr. George Ritson conjectured: "Was it the tricks of the little Magician, the thunder of Mars, or the breath of Bellona that destroyed the Cabinet?"

Other Pennsylvania patriots were periphrastically scathing of Capital scenes. In Sherman's Creek was ventured: "The disbanded

Cabinet—some of whom esteem virtue as a jewel of great price.” Berks county did obeisance to “our fair countrywomen, dear to our hearts and homes; unwelcome only in our political affairs.”

Ohians, also, had outlet in “The Malign Influence—the wife of King Menelaus and the lady so famous at Washington are entitled to an equal niche in the Temple of Fame; the one for causing the destruction of Troy, and the other the dissolution of the American cabinet.”

Ire was deeply imbedded. In Hagerstown, Md., at a Jackson dinner, citizens displayed censure in sparing their cheers. When the President of the United States was toasted came three cheers; and a like number for the United States, the land of the Free and the home of the Brave. But when National Character was vaunted with devout wish for “the refinement of Greece and the dignity of Rome . . .” six cheers were bellowed, mostly in recollection of the recent loss of dignity in the Capital.

Up in New Haven, founded by Eaton’s family, wit was bold. Everybody laughed at this one, truculent with truth:

General Jackson commands all
Mr. Van Buren contrives all
Mrs. Eaton rules all
Office seekers approve of all
The tariff men want all
Trade and Commerce suffer all
The nullifiers threaten all
Fence men grasp all
The newest converts get all
Uncle Sam pays all
Honest men are obliged to bear all
If God has not pity on all
The Devil will take all.

But the Devil didn’t get his due at the Jackson dinner in Washington at all. When the fair were toasted in two different offerings, the one virtuously admitted that “Gallantry was born to defend

them," and the other that "'Tis for men to perform great actions but 'tis for women to inspire them." That certainly mirrored Administration approval of Peggy, as well as Jackson's stand.

Equally appreciative was the Jackson Dinner in Georgetown. This meeting unanimously adopted a resolution disproving that the President "attempted to control . . . the private intercourse of society." Every citizen present, including the chairman, Mr. Francis Scott Key, believed such stories "without the shadow of foundation."

Shame! Shame! cried the *National Journal* the next morning. It directed its derision to the author of the Star Spangled Banner:

It is a fact known to hundreds that Mr. Francis Scott Key not only openly and undisguisedly disapproved of the conduct of the "Greatest and Best" (Jackson) in the attempt to control . . . society but was, moreover, the friend and counsellor of the Rev. Mr. Campbell in the part taken by him on that occasion. Why this denial of a circumstance notorious as the sun of noonday?

Oh, say can you see!

Jackson boiled when he read the toasts given at the dinner of the "dismissed clerks." His heated remonstrance, where before had been reserve, showed resentment at public pasquinades against Peggy. He wrote Donelson about toasts coupling his wife's name with the Calhoun feminine faction that "your dear little Emily I fear before this matter ends, will be brought in bold relief before the nation." But it was Peggy, not Emily, whose figure was to be perpetuated in bas-relief on the American political panel.

As though his mortification were not complete at this pedestal pairing of his niece's name and the enemies', he added bitterly: "It is following the example of that base man Calhoun, who is secretly saying that *mrs. Eaton is the President*."

Forthwith, more toasts and speeches were forthcoming. Public dinners, with talks from the principals, were given to the Chosen People of the Diaspora. Branch, Ingham and Berrien, eager to expose the Presidential favoritism for Peggy, accepted them all.

Van Buren and Eaton refused theirs. They had no messianic missions. Mr. Eaton declined his with the sad reflection that

few of us, in this life, are without difficulties and trials; mine have been severe. Yet I have consolation in the belief "that the greatest friend of truth is Time—her greatest enemy, prejudice—and her constant companion, humility!" Recent events have placed me, most reluctantly, in noisy strife before the public; to the unnecessary excitement which it has occasioned, I wish to contribute nothing. Reposing in private life, my desire is to see the public mind at rest, rather than by any course of mine to disturb it; to quiet angry feelings, and by no participation, to afford any new impulse to further misrepresentations. At a time like the present when political designs interpose a dark and misty medium to every vision, and when the ties of former friendships are rudely rent asunder, I cannot shut my eyes to the admonition offered. . . . Besides, every moment must necessarily be employed in preparations for my departure home . . .

Peggy was to leave Washington, then! But not for long.

Citizen toasts to Peg's enemies were succeeded by newspaper roasts to the President and his Pompadour, until the *Globe* seemed disposed to think "the public . . . sick . . . of the subject . . . it seems willing to bury . . ."

Bury? This past was too lively to bury its dead yet. Editorially, they vowed they "would not permit this matter to sleep." It was serious business.

Is it of no concern to the American people to find, that for two years past, public affairs have been involved in a disgraceful court squabble? . . . That a Cabinet on which, on their retirement, he lavished applause, could not leave the metropolis without abusing each other like pickpockets in the newspapers and bandying charges of conspiracy, assassination, murder . . . etc. . . .

Half-humorously, the New York *Evening Journal's* editor sought to dispel serious charges with which ex-statesmen were shaming the state, when he wrote that "it's all moonshine; the people want to hear nothing further and Mrs. Eaton is out of the question."

But Mrs. Eaton's part in the Administration was the perpetual query upon which Duff Green now pounded away. She was very much the question, a marked woman for the opposition. Indeed the Cabinet corpse was to be exhumed by so many ghouls that the whole affair became a ghastly farce on the ability of free men to govern themselves and to take or leave office with pride instead of vanity. It inclines one to the belief of some impartial editors who quoted Montesquieu that "nothing so much lessens the character of great men, as the attention they pay to their personal injuries." The heat grew greater, but not the humility.

The *Telegraph*, unauthorized, insisted the President had sent an official member of Congress to tell Cabinet ministers to visit Mrs. Eaton or they wouldn't be countenanced themselves. This the *Globe*, authoritatively, continued to deny. The *Journal of Commerce* correspondent, evidently endeavoring to earn his doubled salary since he opened Peggy's Pandora Box and let out all the Administration ills, communicated:

You might suppose that since the resignation of the late Secretary of War, we have become as cool as a cucumber, but I assure you that at the very moment when these delightful commodities abound in our market, we are in the solstice of malign influence.

Peggy was still in town, her influence as strong as ever.

With expanding heat, gentlemen of the ex-Cabinet ensemble grew more expansive. Mid-July, Mr. Berrien, whose coolness had made Eaton forget him in Ingham's pursuit and whose retirement had been more gentlemanly than the others, broke his silence. In a long letter to the *Globe* he said definitely that Colonel Johnson couldn't deny that the President had sent him to suggest that they at least invite Mrs. Eaton to their large parties—or leave office.

Mr. Blair, publishing Berrien's letter to him, appended one of his own. Blair also printed a communication on hand from Colonel Johnson to "clear the skirts of the President of a charge which you are well aware ought not to be attached to him." It was an un-

fortunate analogy. Why clear the President's *skirts* when *he* wore *trousers*?

Before the President's stained "skirts" were cleaned that summer, more than a hundred official letters were issued to the press, as well as five Expositions, each longer than a Presidential proclamation or Inaugural address that would fill two full pages of a modern newspaper. Cabinet ministers took as many pains to denounce Peggy to the public as to prepare their official Reports to Congress.

Mr. Berrien was the first to admit publicly that the *Globe* was certainly trying to clear the President's "skirts," and was delighted that the official paper had made this statement in its wish to "represent this matter truly to the public."

Blair admitted, in a circumlocutious letter, that the Congressman's call had been made with Jackson's "approval," but not his "authority." There was a difference, as Jackson well knew, he claimed. He told how Jackson had admitted it in the paper he read Cabinet ministers, after the Dutch Minister's wife's insult to Peggy. He had then said he had no wish to interfere in his Cabinet's domestic relations. . . .

Berrien had no knowledge of such a paper, he claimed, in print, within a few hours. (Special editions were rushed off the press to tell the public the latest truth according to party.) Mr. Berrien "never saw it, nor were its contents communicated" to him. Mr. Blair contemptuously disclaimed that lapse of memory. "I am authorized to say," he added in italics, "that if you will call on the President, he will again exhibit and read to you this original document."

It certainly must be original, exclaimed in unison Cabinet complainers in the persons of Berrien in Washington, Ingham in New Hope, Pa., and Branch in North Carolina, for we never had any paper read to us!

By this time, no one knew which side to believe. So Mr. Berrien sent another exposition out. Acting as spokesman for his former colleagues, he gave as excuse that

for the sake of my children, I will not submit to continued misrepresentations of the public journals. The best legacy I have to bequeath them is the untarnished reputation of their father.

He had "studiously abstained from any effort to excite . . . public feeling" and then in six columns of stuff, he studiously excited it, with scholarly and restrained statements so legal in their phraseology, as befitted the late Attorney-General, that the public could not quite grasp it all. But the late Secretary of the Treasury's statement included, they understood. Money talked and everyone comprehended the meaning of:

"That my continuance in office would depend upon the consent of my family to visit Mrs. Eaton and invite her to large parties I considered at the time . . . offensive." He would have resigned immediately "but was only dissuaded by the earnest remonstrances of . . . friends . . . who urged . . . that although my personal respect for the President might be impaired, my services to the department were for the country and Pennsylvania!"

Mr. Berrien said the same for Georgia and Mr. Branch verified for North Carolina this violation of personal impulse for state satisfaction.

"I considered the charge of my family to be a sacred trust, belonging exclusively to myself, as a member of society," Mr. Ingham admitted at the end of his Address, without admitting that his wife's name had been used quite as ill in some sections of Washington society as Mrs. Eaton's.

Every citizen, too, considered his wife his personal, non-trespass property and be damned if even the President could make her do what she wouldn't in the name of her own womanhood. The Exposition rekindled fire against the Pompadour presence. Indeed it threw

the editor of the *Official* into a quandry, the President into a paroxysm, and the party into a fever.

But Peggy was to throw them all into the saving sanity of laughter.

Rumors about Eaton's immediate removal from the seat of Government arose. Some said he was to be dispatched to Russia, but one paper advised that "even Empress Catherine would have exiled her favorite for lighter trespasses on decorum and purity" than Peggy's. Some said Eaton was to go as Governor of the Michigan territory since Lewis Cass, its former head, had become Secretary of War. But the truth of the Eatons' next move was still a mystery.

Papers poured out all manner of rhyme with good reason until "the muses themselves . . . entered the lists, and struck up a tune to the worthy Statesmen's last dance."

The Boston *Courier* did it best in "King Log and the Frogs, a Musical Ecologue not to be found in Aesop or Aristophanes":

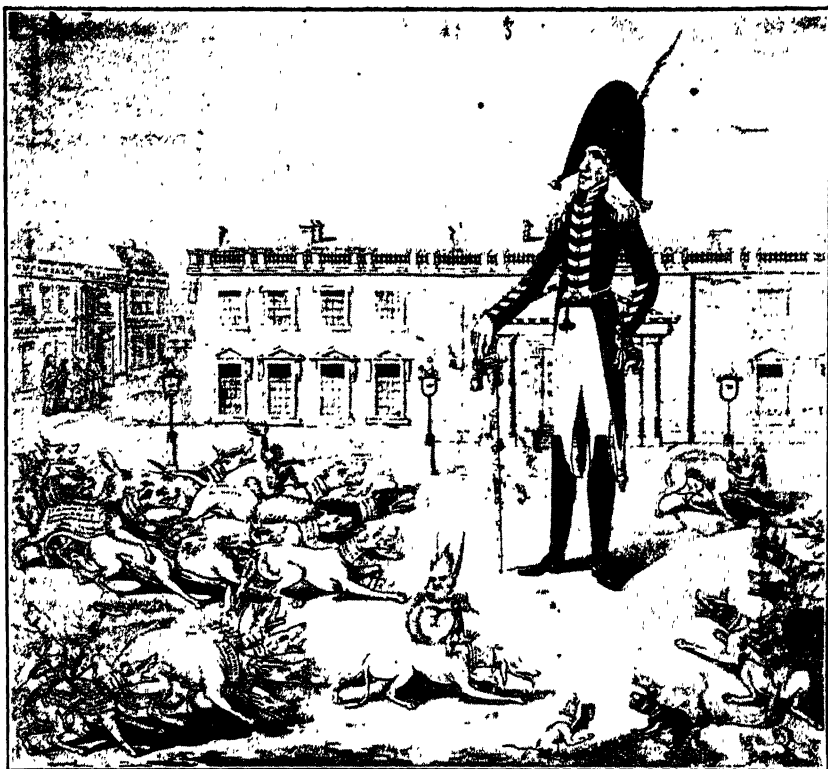
KING LOG

Lackaday! What's the cause of this noisy proceeding?
 I took you my lieges, for men of more breeding.
 I vow and protest it, without any joke,
 'Tis vastly uncivil to make such a riot.

My eyes! what a genius the rogues have for muttering!
 Did ever one hear such pestilent sputtering?
 Have done with your babbling,
 Grumbling and gabbling,
 Lest I grapple my sceptre and hit you a poke.

Van Dunderhead's glories are nip't in the bud!
 The rest of my small craft adrift on the flood,
 Major Dogberry Eat-em-raw stuck in the mud!
 Four-fifths of the "unit" off at a stroke,
 All the curs in the nation,—I cannot tell how,
 Take it into their heads to set up a bow wow . . .

But papers were not alone in the game of tracing striking similes. Toward the end of July, the *Globe* put an end to speculations about Eaton's next step with notice that



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THE PRESS YELPS AT THE PRESIDENT AND HIS POMPADOUR

"All the curs in the nation,—I can not tell how,
Take it into their heads to set up a bow wow . . ."

On the collar of each cur is the name of a contemporary newspaper or its editor.

he has not yet left the city, and we presume upon his high-mindedness so far as to believe that he will not, while the kennel corps, Tray, Blanch and Sweet-heart, growl and bark so fiercely.

That description savors so much of Peggy, who thus nicknamed Berrien, the Barrister; Branch, the Pallid Patriot, and Ingham, the Quaking Quaker, that even the opposition grinned and gave it space. What a woman!

5.

August brought forth the most feverish food for the political cauldron, all bitters and condiments. Highly-spiced public appetite, constantly sharpened by tid-bit denial, wanted solid fare, well seasoned.

It was treated, at one serving, to a stew of explanations, *exposés* and expositions, epilogistic in nature, which hammered at the heart of political power, and all unhampered since entirely ex-officio.

The *United States Gazette*, in Philadelphia, announced that Mr. Berrien's last address and the accompanying correspondence "are but 'cakes and custards,' as Sancho was wont to say, to what is about to appear. Thus, bad begins but worse remains behind." The editor was right. He had his eye on New Hope.

Mr. Ingham tossed the first fare in the scorching melting pot. On August second, he gave six more columns of reasons for his required resignation. The public, which should have been shock-proof by this time, was really stunned. For Ingham did hurl a bomb-shell. It was the President's threat to send the Dutch Minister's wife home and her husband with her.

What, commiserated the papers, what, had General Jackson put his threat into action, would have been the consequence? War, inevitable War! Where, cried citizens who weren't even aware of a Minister from the Netherlands in their midst before, is Chevalier Huygens now?

The *Telegraph* soon answered:

When the Baron and his amiable family resided in this city, their hospitable mansion was the center of attraction for the beauty and fashion of the metropolis. Where are they now? They have left us.

The Huygens were in New York, on their way back to Holland, for he had been recalled by his government.

Nothing could have been more crystallized comment on Mrs. Eaton's influence on the Administration, with its international implications, than this irrefutable fact. Official papers might deny until print grew black before readers' eyes but nobody could negate this undeniable removal. The Dutch Minister was not in Washington. Nor, indeed, were any of Mrs. Eaton's enemies. Everyone who could have been reached officially was officially deposed, they decided—Calhoun, Branch, Berrien, Ingham, Emily Donelson, and now the Dutch Minister.

And all because, confided the *Journal of Commerce* correspondent, still on the *qui vive* to collect his ten,

they didn't invite to their parties the most puissant lady of the most impuissant member of the Cabinet.

After this, there was absolutely no restraint. Everyone now came forward, unabashed, with letters testifying to his part in pre-Inauguration and post-Cabinet affairs until one paper remarked that "Mr. Calhoun and Mrs. Eaton are the rival candidates for the enviable distinction of having produced the explosion," and John Quincy Adams asked petulantly "what else could be expected from a President himself an adjudicated adulterer," so intermingled were political and personal motifs in the multitudinous *exposés*.

As the dung heap grew, five months after the dissolution, even the very American horizon blushed for shame. For a red blaze overcast the sky—a strangely fitting astronomical phenomenon, or just a sign of torrid heat, according to the side by which one swore. While superstitious writers interpreted the heavenly blush as divinely retributive and astrologers measured the actual effects of the blaze

on the heat, Major and Mrs. Eaton were likewise in an observatory tower, trying dispassionately to write a "Candid Appeal to the American Public." If the name of Peggy Eaton was to go down in history as cause for national shame, there must be some word in her own good fame. Peg put in the pointers. Eaton quietly composed it.

Because this book, which sold thousands of copies the day it came from the press, silenced effectively the entire country on this subject, it appears even now dispassionate. Eaton, under whose name it was issued, had suffered sincerely throughout this hectic turmoil. Peggy had probably enjoyed moments, glorying in her power. Eaton, more sensitive to criticism, more weather-worn and wise to the inexorable demands of tradition, wrote his Appeal in unruffled dignity. It was well-written and well thought out. Even the *Journal of Commerce* admitted

if written by him, it evinces a remarkable proficiency, in comparison with some of his previous attempts.

One eager admirer declared that he would rather have been its author than that of all the public speeches ever made in America, including Patrick Henry's and Daniel Webster's! It is a document which deserves its full share, for it prevented further pettifoggings:

It is with extreme reluctance that I appear before the public upon a subject purely of personal character. To me, nothing could be more painful than the necessity of bringing into discussion in the newspapers, anything which concerns my private and domestic relations. In civilized society, a man's house is his castle, and the circle of his family a sanctuary never to be violated. He who drags before the public its helpless inmates, and subjects them to rude assaults, deserves to be considered worse than a barbarian. Against those who commit such sacrilege, and shun an honorable accountability, the public will justify an appeal, which, under other circumstances, might not be considered admissible. I expect not by this effort to silence those who have been assailing all that is dear to me. It may open afresh the fountains of their abuse.

There is another consideration which would seem to impose silence. These

are times of angry political contest, unsuited to dispassionate inquiry. Already have the enemies of the President made use of my private relations to injure and harass him. In attempting to represent him as devoting his thoughts and his power to further my views and wishes, they seek to blind the people to the principles and acts of his administration. They will doubtless seize even upon my humble efforts at self-vindication as means of promoting that design, seriously calculating by their machinations, that the people of the United States may be wrought into a "tempest of passion," and thus be induced to forget the signal success of his foreign negotiations, and the unparalleled prosperity and happiness which, under his administration, our country enjoys.

But to all these consequences, I submit. . . . A portion of the community will at least do me justice. They will perceive that the President is in no need of any developments from me to give proofs of his integrity, and that it is not for his sake that I present myself before the public. It is a paramount duty which I owe to myself, and to my family, and which shall be performed. Others may conceive, but I cannot describe, the pain those attacks have inflicted. It was indeed enough that I was assailed in private circles, while I was in office; but retiring from its labours, with a view to sit down at my own home in Tennessee, it was but a reasonable expectation to indulge, that I might escape a repetition of these assaults, and be permitted to enjoy my fireside and friends in peace. But instead of putting an end to this unfeeling war, my resignation served to make my enemies more bold.

What before was whispered in dark corners, now glared in the columns of newspapers. Men who had been my friends—who had received favors at my hands—who had partaken of the hospitalities of my house, and given pledges of friendship, at my own board, became my deadliest enemies, while I still confided in them. I sought that redress which wrongs so wanton and deadly provoked, and which public opinion, under such circumstances, has always justified. It was refused in a way which added insult to injury; and I was then accused, by one of the malignant calumniators, as having sought revenge at the head of a band of assassins. Not satisfied with privately injuring me in my own, and the honor of my household . . . these persons have, one after another, come before the public, to give countenance and sanction to the calumnies of a reckless press. Mr. Ingham, Mr. Branch, and Mr. Berrien, with evident concert, and deliberate design, by filling the country with erroneous and discolored statements, and substituting falsehood for truth, have sought to consummate the ruin which their conduct in office so insidiously began.

What can I do? What course adopt? There are persons committed to my charge who are dear to me. I am their only protector. Shall I see them worse

than murdered, by men who claim the culture and polish of civilized life, and not lift my hand and my voice for their rescue? These gentlemen express a desire to preserve their characters, as a previous inheritance for their children. Is the good name of a *mother*, of less value to her orphan daughters? Did they forget, that she whom so relentlessly they pursue, and who in nothing ever wronged them, has two innocent little children whose father lies buried on a foreign shore? Had these little ones ever wronged them? Were they and their mother so much in the way of these gentlemen, that in their malignity, they should consent to sap the foundation of their future prospects in life? Had they no remorse, in conspiring and seeking to rob them of all that villainy and fraud has left them—the inheritance of a mother's good name? And if they could be stimulated in their addresses to the public, by the desire of transmitting to *theirs* a spotless honor and unsullied name, what might not be expected of me, in defence of the slandered wife of my bosom, and her helpless, unprotected children?

Attacks on myself, I disregard. A man's character is in his own hands; in his bosom he knows how to protect it. It is by his own acts only that he can be degraded. Not so with a female. The innocent and the guilty alike the envenomed tongue of slander may reach and destroy. It is a withering blast, which can blight the sweetest rose as well as the most noisome weed.

After describing the truly friendly feeling he had toward all Cabinet ministers and how they served him, he asked:

Now, what was the motive for all this relentless persecution? Could it really be that my wife was indeed the cause? Was it merely to exclude a female from their "good society"? Was one woman so dangerous to public morals, and so formidable in influence and power, as to require all this strong array of Cabinet counselors—combination of members of Congress—confederacy of fashionable ladies? Was it for that attacks were made upon the integrity of her husband, and honor, truth and candor sacrificed? The idea is truly ridiculous.

She was lone and powerless. Those who liked her society sought it; and those who did not kept away. Neither she nor her husband, entered into cabals and intrigues to the prejudice and injury of others. Their own multiplied wrongs, they bore with as much patience as could be expected, from mortals, endowed with human passions and sensibilities. A common understanding prevailed, that each should seek his own associates, according to his own will, uninfluenced and unrestrained. The *motive*, therefore, was not to

exclude us from society. It is a matter altogether *too small* to account for the acts and untiring zeal of so many *great men*.

He speculated further:

Was the *motive* merely to exclude me from the Cabinet? Was my presence there dangerous to the interest of the country, or to its institutions? Had I the power or the disposition to injure the one or overthrow the other? Was it pretended that I wanted the ability, intelligence or integrity necessary to the management of the Department of War? Of its management, there has been no complaint, while it was in my hands. I left it at least as prosperous as I found it! Was it suspected that I was not true to the President and would prove false and faithless to his administration? A confidential intercourse of more than fifteen years, the highest admiration of his character and the deep personal interest felt in the success of his administration, were surely sufficient to guard me against that. Nothing of this sort entered into the minds of my traducers. They had no desire for my exclusion on account of any suspicions entertained that I would willingly do injury to the interests of the country, its institutions, or to the President. To what then shall we look for this motive? An ardent friend of the Vice-President, in 1829, in one short sentence, disclosed it: "*Major Eaton is not the friend of Mr. Calhoun.*"

Duff Green, editor of the *United States Telegraph*, has been from the first an instrument of Mr. Calhoun. . . . From the very press from which probably he daily circulates his abuse of me, I have a note which was protested and paid by me, on which I was not an endorser, and which has been in my possession several years, the whole or part of which still remains unpaid. . . . These things might have been omitted, for charity and friendship are secret in their operation, and should not be proclaimed to the world, but surely I may be permitted to mention them, not in the spirit of ostentatious liberality, but that the public may be able to appreciate the character of my calumniators. . . .

In 1829-30, Mr. Green was a frequent visitor at my house . . . with his wife and daughters and invited my wife and myself to his. He, on several occasions, tendered his services and his paper in vindication of us, against the slanders and abuse which that time were whispered about . . .

Now, I only know he hates me beyond even the power to extend common justice; and wherefore is it so? Because bad men are apt to dislike those from whom they have received favors? But that he should descend so far as to become the traducer of a female because she is the wife of one to whom he is under obligations, never to be repaid, is indeed strange.

What object has he to attain? What purpose to answer? Surely, he cannot

think that in the choice of a Chief Magistrate of this country, the American people can be so debased that female character and feeling are to be made the test of elections.

Detraction has struck everything around me. And, although it has been uniformly pretended that the persecutions against me originated in great regard and delicacy for public feeling and morals, yet what are the proofs to authorize the *rumors* about which Mr. Ingham and Mr. Berrien *would not trouble themselves to inquire*, but which, notwithstanding, they could slyly and secretly whisper into circulation. *They have produced none!*

It was precisely because rumors were being printed as facts, because foreigners would think the Presidential issue based on female innocence, that far-seeing persons pleaded that the subject be dropped. In Cumberland, Me., a political gathering expressed the opinion that editors, in printing such rumors as facts, "degrade the government of the country, render it distrusted at home and contemptible in the eyes of foreign states."

The *National Intelligencer*, still impartial, implored the papers of the country, in the name of patriotism, to stop printing anything else on Peggy because our papers went abroad! The *National Journal*, while giving its readers a full account, stooped to philosophize that

at no period in English history, since the accession of the present family to the throne, have public affairs been so influenced by court controversies, as they have been in this country under General Jackson's administration. We also fancy ourselves to be reading the annals of France, in the reign of Louis XV., when Ministers were appointed and dismissed at a woman's nod, and the interests of the nation tied to her apron-string.

That was what editors now feared for, our national character's reputation abroad. What will Europe say? Before they had been so embroiled in domestic discoveries that they didn't stop to consider this serious question. Were Presidents no better, or worse, than Kings? The *American Wreath* anxiously wondered, too:

John Bull will be ready to die with ecstasy when he hears of the domestic broils of the American ministry.

John Bull was preparing for Coronation ceremonies, costing some hundred thousand pounds, while Irish subjects were wandering along the seashore collecting "seaweed to cook, bleeding cows to boil the blood, and digging up *seed* potatoes" to keep from starving. But the *Wreath* was right. Before long it had an answer.

The London *Times* editorialized on the Cabinet's dissolution, saying it

shows that our Republican brethren west of the Atlantic are not exempted from the private influences in the management of public affairs, which in their severer moods they ascribe exclusively to the old Courts of Europe. *A woman was the cause of the Trojan war*, and the slighted pretensions of a minister's wife occasioned the overthrow of President Jackson's Cabinet. . . .

It would appear that for some reason or other (into which we forbear to inquire) the lady was sent—not to Troy, but—to Coventry, by her fair co-equals in the official circles in Washington, and that, being supported by her husband, as he was in duty bound, she formed a faction against her rivals. The President, to show his impartiality, frequented her parties, as well as those of the other ministerial dames, and thus added jealousy to dislike. At last the ladies contrived to embroil matters so much, and to excite so many misunderstandings between their husbands, that no business could be done, and the President, in his continued impartiality, was obliged to dismiss the whole batch.

We have forgotten the names of his new Ministers, but we suppose that in their selection he must have taken security against the occurrence of a similar catastrophe by choosing bachelors, or that he must have written on the Presidential Palace one of the rules of the King of Navarre, in *Love's Labor Lost*: "Item, That no woman come within a mile of my court, on pain of losing her tongue."

Thus, in a nut-shell and in derision, it gave the truest picture of the proceedings, with only two errors: Jackson's labor of love to his lamented Rachel was not lost, nor was his championship of Peggy Eaton unworthy, for she was destined to charm those very courts of Europe with the brilliance of her tongue.

BOOK V: IN FOREIGN PORTS

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IN FOREIGN PORTS

I.

"MRS. EATON cannot be forced or persuaded to leave Washington. Her triumph, for so she calls the dissolution of the Cabinet . . . is not yet complete. All her adversaries are not yet turned out of office, to be sure, three secretaries and a foreign minister are dismissed, but Mr. and Mr. and Mr. remain, they too must go . . . she *must* be received into society . . . she hopes . . . that next winter the present Cabinet ministers will open their doors for her . . ."

While rich Mrs. Smith praised God that she was devoid of worldly ambition, poor Peg withered because there was no longer a prong for her in the political world. Tossed on a sea of detraction, her very enjoyment in resistance was a buoy that kept her bobbing and alert. Cast up to shore by a feeble wave of retirement, she wasted, for her beauty and spirit shone best in activity.

One plank in the compact Cabinet plan of dissolution had cap-sized. Unfortunately, it was Peg's. Van Buren had been made Minister to England, Barry remained in office, but Eaton got no soft berth. Jackson fervently hoped that Hugh Lawson White, Senator from Tennessee, would replace him as Secretary of War, so that Eaton could re-enter the Senate, where the President needed friends.

White, on private and political grounds, declined the honor. His point-blank refusal stranded Eaton on the political rocks. There was nothing to do but run for office, toward which Eaton was disinclined. He was made president of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, but he wanted to go home to Tennessee. Peg became depressed at the very thought of leaving the Capital, for she truly loved the life it offered her, strife and all.

It was her one immutable tenet: she had no wish to leave Wash-

ington, dead or alive. Capricious to all else, Peg was steadfast to her love of birthplace. How could she leave the one city in the country which was then spectacular? Where else could her eyes sparkle at prancing white horses drawing a gilded equipage, summit of civilized movement? Where else could she find so choice a circle of companions, with graces redolent of the salon? Not in Tennessee, where opportunity in lands had levelled life to middle class dullness; where politics were thrashed out in the courtyards, and where a woman's interest in them at once stamped her as *déclassé*.

Eaton understood Peg's need of variegated background, saw that she drew strength from the very swirl of vortex. Nevertheless, she loved him. Confident that he could create an atmosphere of animation for her, even in the West, he asked her to return with him. Wisely, he gave no compulsion. He knew Peg's generous nature would dictate, instead of self-indulgence, response to his strong wish. When she gave, it was with prodigality, not parsimony, whether love or hate. Rightly, he wished the decision to be hers.

She consented, with the proviso that their home in Washington was not to be dismantled. Perhaps he, too, would find Tennessee tame. Rent the house, she urged. Then he knew her refuge was that they might return at will.

Eaton's "Candid Appeal" was convincing judicious-minded that the whole tempest against Peggy was founded on rumour, "rumour alone," and as Jackson wrote Van Buren to London, enclosing copies for Sir Charles Vaughan, John Randolph and Washington Irving, it was having "a most powerful and beneficial effect on the Union." Washington, though, was still raw on the subject, for when Anne Royall wrote a play called "The Cabinet, or large parties in Washington," the theatre refused to put it on, although Jackson papers championed the piece.

In early autumn, while the leaf was still gold, the Eatons left the Capital for Tennessee, spending their last evening at the White House with President Jackson.

In the dawn when their stage-coach towed them toward Balti-

more, dark despair filled the air for Peggy Eaton, for never had she left Washington to live elsewhere but against her will. Not wishing to show Eaton her repugnance to such settlement, she contained herself while traveling, using diverting sights to stave off his penetration.

When the driver called halt, her heart betrayed her. On alien ground, she collapsed. Peg was ill, very ill, Eaton saw. For two weeks she tossed in troubled delirium in Baltimore, while newspapers printed timorous reports of her severe illness, hinting at depleted health. Now anxiety burdened their souls that her cave-in came, like Rachel's, in her hour of vindication. Even her enemies hoped for her recovery, fearful lest they be accused of causing her death.

In mid-autumn, she was well enough to move on. Or did she wish to return, Eaton asked in genuine concern? The doctor who bled her didn't have heart enough to know her malady psychic protest, but her husband did. Her answer made him admire even more her indomitable spirit. She would *move on*.

A trifle pale, her beauty more deeply etched than ever, Peg arrived at her future home-state with forebodings. Even Eaton was assailed by misgivings. Heralded by small-town newspapers, her progress westward had been more like that of a prima donna than that of a private member of society. Everywhere, women craned necks to catch sight of "The American Pompadour," just as their husbands had stretched wiry torsos to see their Hero at Inauguration two years before. A tintinnabulation of gossip, like an unwilling ghost, followed in their wake. Officially, he was no longer a public man, but with qualms he saw that it would take time to fade Peg's significance as a Public Woman, castigating capitals of the nineteenth century.

Without discrediting his amiability, it would be hard enough to retire to private life. Many invitations to dinners, tendered as propitiation for the persecution he had officially suffered, poured in.

Governor Carroll, of Tennessee, as soon as he heard of the Eatons' arrival, went to the General Assembly and started a subscription paper for a Public Dinner in Nashville. Lesser officials in other places followed suit.

Ladies now turned out wholesale to visit Mrs. Eaton, many confessing that they came from "curiosity, which was satisfied at sight" of her. In the theatre, she had only to appear in a box to cause chatter and chidings. When Eaton saw the gabbing interest, he had premonitions that the dames would discuss "the awful Mrs. Eaton" or "pretty Peggy O'Neale," according to their prejudice, beyond the day of her death. He resolved to sink again into privacy, rather than expose her to further officious condemnation. As soon as he settled in Franklin, he wrote Jackson that at home he felt "relieved of the weight of mountains that were upon" him.

The President, convinced of the sincerity of Eaton's serenity in retirement, concluded that "he is like myself, in this, that he would not thru choice, abandon retirement, and sweet home for any office that could be offered to him."

At the same time Governor Carroll wrote Jackson that "Major Eaton never stood as well in Tennessee as he does now; and if his friends urge him for the Senate a year hence the probability is in favor of his election. . . ."

Peg, like Jackson, took Eaton at his word. In a transport of quiet, he lived in his library. She drooped, while he seemed revitalized. That winter they read the news: Van Buren had been rejected by the Senate as Ambassador to Great Britain, although Jackson had, high-handedly, already sent him there. In London, where Van Buren, in company with Prince Talleyrand, betrayed no defeat by his composure, someone in the distinguished company said it was to the public man's advantage to have been the subject of an outrage. Eaton seemed to think so too, for he wrote Jackson immediately advising against renomination, saying "let him stand where his foes have placed him. . . . The enemy has done for him, more than could his friends . . ."

Peggy, he said, was "in bad health, and has been so, since her arrival in this State." He was a delegate to Baltimore and "if I can go, I Will."

Peg perked up. Instead of choosing the President by the old electoral system, a nominating convention, with delegates instructed directly by the people, had been suggested by Major Lewis. This *modus operandi* of subsequent democracy stimulated Peg's interest in politics again, and she urged Eaton to go, asking if she might attend with him as onlooker.

This time, in Baltimore, Peg felt not prostration but prowess. Her senses told her, scenting competitive aggrandizement, that Eaton, at bottom energetic, could not withstand the lure of politics any less than she. He had a genius for them, she a generic interrelation. Jackson was renominated, with Van Buren as running mate. Peggy gave them their next President.

Sure enough, Eaton changed his mind about retirement, deciding that late spring to run for Senator. Willingly, god wot, Peg went back to Tennessee to help him in his race against Felix Grundy, who first recommended the unknown Eaton to the reading world of America as Jackson's biographer. Very cleverly, Grundy intimated to voters that while personally the President preferred Eaton, politically Jackson's preference was for himself. Certificates to that effect would be forthcoming, his campaign managers vouched, though to be shown only secretly so as not to arouse Eaton's anger against his old Chief. Jackson writhed. Hadn't he given "unequivocal evidence of confidence in him as a statesman?" Nevertheless, it worked. Grundy won.

Unofficially, Eaton, of his own accord, returned to Washington. He was bitter about his defeat, saying in confidence to Van Buren that he "found out lately only, that diffidence and retiring modesty, or anything akin to them, are good for nothing nowadays. . . . I am here a very private and unobtrusive man, I assure you. I have not seen the President more than a half a dozen times in the last four weeks."

Peggy, still inert by illness, was dispirited. Cholera came from Europe and ravaged the country. Eaton was frankly worried. She seemed to have no will to live. Eaton wrote a friend, apologizing for delay because of "the ill-state of health of my family which has left me scarcely time to think. My wife is still low and declining every day. I dread to anticipate but fear greatly the result. Were my spirits light and buoyant I could say many things to you, from this wretched place of latitude and departure . . . here are again congregated the wise in their own conceit . . . the great in their own opinion of themselves. As Congress moves and acts, I . . . believe that in a few years it will become the most cheap and degraded legislative body in the world . . . to which the decent men of the country will not consent to go.

"Nullification goes merrily on. Some are here to watch—some are at home to prepare for the worst and final resort. Amongst them, we probably shall have trouble, if not enough to prove serious, at least enough to make something to interrupt the repose of our Union . . ." He foresaw the Civil War.

Sooner than he knew, however, he was to go South. Jackson appointed him Governor of Florida, still a territory, abounding in slaves. Peggy would be First Lady of a large territory, but she would have preferred remaining a Senator's wife in Washington. She was reluctant to go. But Eaton persuaded her that they needn't stay long if she disliked it too much. She had been so sick. Even a single winter in the sunshine there would be beneficial to her health. If only to regain strength for an inevitable return to battle, she consented.

2.

Before he accepted the appointment, an ex-officer from Tallahassee wrote Donelson that "Major Eaton's appointment will be generally popular here—highly popular. Had I known or suspected it, I would have remained as secretary. Governor Duval's friends go

warmly for him and most of the leading planters are pleased. . . ."

In lush southern soil, trouble was again brewing with the Indians but all beneath the surface. Eaton delayed accepting finally because he was too much engaged with Indian treaties that hung over from his Department of War days, and because Peg, once returned to Washington, was really loath to leave it again. This time she would have to break up her home in the Capital. When she went West, it had been to Eaton's home. If they went South, it would mean the creation of a new home for both, as well as uprooting her daughters' education at a fashionable Washington academy. Furthermore, Eaton knew that a clique of Peggy's most rabid defamers dwelt, in their dotage, in the land where a more illustrious predecessor failed to find a fountain of youth. How could Peg like Florida where Richard K. Call was one of its important men? But Eaton hated to refuse Jackson the pleasure of conferring the appointment. . . .

That, at least, was the belief of retiring Governor Duval, who had headed the territory ever since Jackson himself put Florida's house in legal order. There was a garden party under magnolia bloom. One guest broke the silence with:

"So John H. Eaton is going to be your successor, Governor Duval?"

"Yes, I saw what was coming when I was in Washington city a few weeks since. General Jackson had to do something for Eaton after dissolving the Cabinet, so the best was to send him off. . . ."

"And will Mistress Eaton accompany the new incumbent?" another queried.

"She will cut a dash with us new country people, certainly; but she is the new overseer's wife and must be received," put in a third gentleman.

"Well enough for you to say that, Mays, who have no wife," envied a fourth, adding "I shall call on the lady, if my wife will let me."

"Well," put in a fifth, tartly, "I hope, if our ladies are in a new

country, they will show that they have a due respect for themselves."

Governor Duval stopped speculation, perhaps with due respect to the office he relinquished, by changing the subject. "Of one thing I am sure, and that is, our Indian troubles will greatly embarrass a new man."

At last, in late June 1834, Eaton sent word to the Secretary of State that he would go. It was not with his customary dispatch or Peg's. Throughout the severely warm summer, there was a sprinkling of cordial letters from the Eatons to the President, home at the Hermitage, complaining of the business of home-wrecking. "To go temporarily from home is an undertaking of some difficulty, but to break up, to pack up—to send affairs to auction and to gather in funds to pay off debts are anchors which cannot be weighed in a hurry. . . . Everything is packed,—end nailing up today, and in two days I shall be off." He was going to Florida by way of Tennessee, and would call on Jackson before leaving. Broadly, he hinted that the governorship of the Northwest territory (Missouri) was open, and friends had been urging him. . . .

Jackson evidently convinced him to the contrary, though there followed a letter from Franklin later in August almost resigning the Florida post. Indeed, its desperate note sounds not unlike Timberlake's letters.

It was late autumn when the Eatons' slow stage drove into Tallahassee, Florida's capital. Old settlers who resented the appointment of an outsider noted that the new Governor's arrival coincided with the eve of official business. Yet the next morning in the newly assembled legislature, he delivered a Message so pertinent to the possibilities of the province that even malcontents were convinced that he had followed carefully Florida's course since it had been a part of the country. Mrs. Eaton's attitude, on the contrary, was condescending to the capital of their glorious land where the whippoorwill's cry and roses in December outweighed all wonders of the world—to them.

Peg's whole frame, worn from her lengthy illness, responded to the sunlight like an awakening bud. In the peculiar softness of the atmosphere she was as exultant as a native at sight of yellow jessamine forming "spirals of golden convolvulus," at sassafras buds peeping out of warm brown cups, or when a cardinal or blue heron sailed through the sky.

However, she noted with equal clarity the lumbering stage which the driver's horn announced twice a week, instead of twice a day as in Washington. Mail from the outside world was forthcoming, consequently, only at three-day intervals at the shanty Post-office. It was not long before the very luxurious growth which at first so charmed her became a lull to temperate life. The semi-tropical tedium was to Peg's nature narcotic to the will. She seldom allowed herself the luxury of living long without its activity.

In the laurel laden groves where strawberry festivals served by lamplight or supper parties were the acme of social existence, ladies talked of "marriages and deaths"—and the new Governor's notorious wife. Mr. Richard Call's daughter, aware of Peggy's reputation but probably ignorant of her father's unwarranted assault on her at an earlier day, acknowledged that Mrs. Eaton was "beautiful and fascinating without doubt. Of good height and graceful form, a wealth of brown hair encircling a face of bright complexion, made variable in its expression by an ever-sparkling deep and clear blue eye, with mouth and chin of finished beauty, together with a vivacious and affable manner, she is the possible heroine of prose and poetry, and though not yet sung in ballads, she fills momentous pages in her country's history. . . . Mrs. Eaton sat in view rollicking and frolicking with her two bright and pretty little girls."

Peg frolicked with her children against ennui. The winter was heavy with real boredom. Only in the latter part of February, when the carnival season came, did life brighten a bit for her. Then, the two hotels in the city were crowded. Barouches, gigs, sulkies, carriages and landaus lurched into town anticipating the races.

On the tracks, gaily dressed jockeys nervously curveted their mounts to left, to right. Nervously, too, their owners stood by, for stakes were high. Ladies in the surrounding stands or improvised seats in vehicles were "busy with bets; gloves, as usual, bandied with fans or books." In the official grandstand, radiant in garlands, were Florida's ultra-fashionables. Prominent among them were Prince Achille Murat, who renounced his place in French nobility to live as land-owner in this heavenly paradise, judges, diverse gentry—and Peggy.

"In green velvet, with long flowing white plumes, was the new Governor's wife . . . here, as elsewhere . . . surrounded with admirers, but these all gentlemen," Ellen Call confirms. "There was Captain Hawkins, who laughed, and who talked as he laughed; Judge Randall, who was classical, quoted Latin and translated it, and Dennet beckoned the muses to her entertainment. If ugliness existed anywhere, it was hidden by the sure polish of success, and she was, as ever, replete in fascination, though she confesses not to like the social atmosphere here.

"I feel *hors du monde* but Governor Eaton will make Pensacola the home of his family,' she said."

Peggy told the truth about her feeling "lost to the world." Privately, she knew the provincialism would pall on her. She liked action. In Florida, there was mainly quiescence. One became inert, if not already so by nature. Apathy was never Peg's province.

In the stand where she told this truth, which was taken as token of spurious superiority, were Mrs. John Branch and Mrs. Richard Call. As the latter's daughter aptly remarked "the meeting here of discordant elements brewed in the National Capital suggested an under-current of intentional sarcasm in the appointment for Florida. But the Governor is himself a most clever gentleman and very much respected personally, and the Madam well adapts herself to those who are courteous."

Before Easter, Peggy left for Pensacola, while Eaton remained at Tallahassee. In this summary departure, she showed her open

contempt for the provincial capital. Even Eaton began to feel lost to the world in the shabby office provided for him, now that Peggy was gone. Frequently, he took flying trips to Pensacola, and he always stayed longer than he planned.

In Pensacola, Peggy arrived at the time of the Mardi Gras, somewhat similar to the festival in New Orleans. Here, "King Comus regnant," all was alive with mimicry. Peggy felt at home. Even the women in white with black lace mantles on their hair were refreshing after the coal-scuttle bonnets and veils of more conventional Tallahassee. Pensacola seemed more Spanish, and life bounding with more alacrity. Peg was not reluctant, despite absence from Eaton, to change the mocking-birds of Tallahassee for the blue-birds of Pensacola. Here, for a brief spring, she was happy. Before summer, however, she was back in Washington, where talk for Van Buren for President, to succeed Jackson, was booming. On the ticket for Vice-President was slated Colonel Richard M. Johnson, the Congressman who publicly called on Cabinet ministers in her behalf.

Well, if Peggy Eaton's champions were chosen as Chief Executives, she certainly felt she should be on hand to witness their elevation. Perhaps with their approach to higher office, she thought to test her own political power. For one day she called on Amos Kendall, now Postmaster-General, in behalf of one of her contractor friends. If he were awarded the contract, she intimated, his family would be happy to bestow a handsome coach on Mrs. Kendall. The coach was never given but neither was Peggy's power negative.

Soon after Peg left, echoes of Indian war whoops resounded in Florida. Before Eaton's arrival, the Seminole tribes had agreed to emigrate to a reservation west of Arkansas, ceded by the United States to them and their heirs forever. Just prior to Eaton's arrival in the province, General Thompson, the Indian agent, was informed of the Indian chiefs' hostility toward fulfilling the treaty. They'd rather have the lowlands of Florida as their happy-hunting ground

now than westlands forever. They'd stay and take their luck along with the white man. One chief, Charley Emathla, clearly foreseeing the eventual destruction and defeat which awaited his race, pleaded for removal. In the autumn of Eaton's arrival as Governor, they were "buying powder in considerable quantities."

There is an old Indian legend that Osceola, a picturesque young Chief married to a half-breed Negress, at a conference concerning removal, repudiated all treaties, and drew his knife in anger. Driving it into the table, he exclaimed: "The only treaty I will execute is this." He was not, then, as powerful as Charley Emathla, so the government hoped for the best. There lives still another legend, unsubstantiated save by repetition, that Osceola smiled when he had his first talk with new Governor Eaton.

Here was a concrete opportunity for Eaton to carry out his belief that the ethnic identity of Indians might be perpetuated in peace, and here were the Indians secreting gunpowder. Well might Osceola have smiled.

At winter's end, the Indians made no move to file Westward, as promised. Then the War Department sent orders that "if necessary, let actual force be employed and their removal effected." Another council was held at the Indian Agency. Indian Chiefs, almost in a body, refused to move at once. Eight agreed to embark for the West later. Osceola, surprisingly enough, was among them. Five refused unconditionally. Those agreeing to removal, however, begged extension of time until January 1, 1836.

With this promise, they seemed content. All they really wished by the manœuvre was to gain time to corral some crops and ammunition. The matter seemingly settled, the Governor went to Washington for the summer season. He found Peg entrenched in the O'Neale family life again, "Ginger" and Margaret spoiled by the irrepressible William.

Once back in Washington, Eaton knew Peg would dislike to budge. The unutterable boredom of Floridian peace was to her as a shroud. However, Eaton coaxed. He had no intention of re-

maining beyond this season. He knew it was dull for her, and the Indian outbursts went against his grain.

Suddenly, he had disquieting news from the territory. Indian ammunition purchases were proving so patent that Osceola was refused the privilege of buying additional quantities. He flew into a rage. His wife had just been traced by her Southern master and forcibly taken back to his plantation. Osceola's ill-temper expressed his indignation: "Am I a negro—a slave? My skin is dark, but not black! I will make the white man red with blood, and then blacken him in the sun and rain, where the wolf shall smell of his bones and the buzzard live upon his flesh!" Less startling skirmishes between the races presaged no abatement of animosity.

True to his promise, Charley Emathla made preparations for removal. In the latter part of November, while the Eatons hurried toward Tallahassee, Osceola made a public example of old Charley in this removal business. Sneaking on the trail to Charley's village, he lay in wait and shot him down. This fratricide resulted in no government action, except arrest and imprisonment of Osceola. All knew combat was near.

Three days after Christmas, Osceola revenged himself. As General Thompson and Lieutenant Constantine Smith, of the Indian Agency, strolled together in an after-dinner smoke, Osceola shot and scalped them. It was signal for wholesale offensive. For six years, it was a fight to the death between paleface and red man for the Floridian peace which Peggy so despised.

Governor Eaton, however, did not remain long after hostilities began to shatter his dream of racial reservations for North American natives. Too many red men preferred to be dead men to leaving in peace for a land where food and game was just as plentiful. It was only at Jackson's urging that Eaton had come back to Florida the second year. Newspapers sensed something, for they printed rumours of a diplomatic mission before his return to their complacent community. Richard Call was not sorry to hear this report, for he thought he stood in line for the governorship. His

wife undoubtedly achieved the pinnacle of her ambition in stepping into the position Peggy abhorred.

In the fall of 1835, the Legislature received word of the appointment of new Governor Richard K. Call. Ex-Governor Eaton was appointed Minister to Spain. Van Buren himself was amused at the spectacle of a Senate, more or less the same as that during the "Eaton imbroglio," endorsing Eaton's appointment without murmur. Mrs. Eaton was not good enough to associate with Washington's women, Van Buren sardonically pondered, but she was evidently sufficiently representative of American womanhood to be sent to the most formal court of Europe. Peggy Eaton would have a true Castle in Spain instead of an American imitation in Pensacola.

3.

"I crossed the sea with Mr. Eaton and family, who added much to the pleasantness of a good passage . . ." wrote Richard Rush, on his way to the American Embassy in England, to President Jackson. Eaton, he said, was a thorough gentleman, and he hoped their new friendship would continue. His family had been denunciatory of Peggy, but the son evidently changed his mind during close companionship on board, for he added: "His wife and daughters were the life of the cabin, rendering many an hour that would have been tedious, cheerful and sprightly. They are all well, and still here, finding difficulty hitherto in getting to Spain by conveyance suitable to all."

In London, where they landed, both Eaton and Peggy would have liked to linger. In the public squares and orderly life, Eaton found a counterpart to his philosophical desire for progress in peace. In the lift of the buildings and the spread of the city, Peggy found a metropolis to her taste.

Sir Charles Vaughan, who was in England preparatory to taking up the Ambassadorship to Turkey, piloted them everywhere socially, and Lady Paul, Minnie Bankhead's mother, made much of Peggy.

Indeed, when the British peerage took a peek at the lady reputed to be the hornet in the American Cabinet nest, it was agreeably surprised to find her cultivated. Peggy, in turn, was surprised that she liked so many of the women, who gave her open-hearted admiration. It was too bad that she had to proceed to Spain, they agreed. The King of England was on his last legs; Princess Victoria, a slip of a girl of seventeen, near her daughter Virginia's age, would rule England one day soon.

In Spain, a woman held the reins of government for a slip of a girl younger still. Queen Cristina, at King Ferdinand's death three years before, became Regent until her six-year old daughter, Isabel, might come of the age to rule. Although this was the dying wish of the King, and duly chronicled in state papers, it violated the Salic law. This decreed that only male issue could claim the throne, for three centuries the custom in Spain, although once a century before a monarch had privately revoked its rule. Don Carlos, the King's younger brother, with the royalists and reactionary peasantry in his train, fought what he considered this usurpation of his throne. Thus, the Carlist and Cristino forces, from reports that crossed the Channel to England, terrorized the country.

However, Minister Eaton should set foot in Spain before the New Year, war or no war. The inter-governmental bankers, the Rothschilds, warned him that his accounts could not be called on until his arrival in Madrid.

In an early October fog, they embarked for Cadiz, leaving London in a mist. The ship was crowded with consumptives, anxious to escape from England's cold to Spain's sunny warmth for the winter. When rounding the Bay of Biscay close to the Spanish coast, they knew they were nearing the waters where Timberlake's last life-breath was drawn. Both confessed a desire to visit his grave before going on to Madrid.

Through all the odious attack on her morality, Peggy had hoped that before the girls were grown to womanhood they might see their father's burial place. It was one of the reasons which made

her urge Eaton to accept the mission. Her first act, on arrival, must be a visit to Timberlake's grave. She'd show those doubting Toms, Dicks and Harrys in America what she thought of their salacious suggestion that the children were not Timberlake's. Even if Eaton had to go on to Madrid at once, she would take "Ginger" and Margaret direct to his tomb.

From infancy, Virginia and Margaret had been taught by Peggy that their father was away at sea, as he was. Timberlake had never seen Margaret, though she was most like him. Though Virginia inherited her father's roving disposition, she was more like her mother. So it was only natural that both girls looked upon Eaton as their second and very dear father.

As they stood on deck with eyes more grave than usual, Cadiz came suddenly out of the sea, with gleaming white buildings of Oriental shape and the soft green of *alemadras*, or walks, in full view. Surrounded on three sides by waters, with the fourth connected to the mainland only by a tiny isthmus, it looked like a Spanish Castle domain come true, for fortifications pinned the unbelievably beautiful domes and spires to reality. Narrow streets, intersecting at right angles, with tall, touching houses, at once stamped the city with a foreign atmosphere for them, accustomed to the wide avenues and small structures of Washington.

The concentration gave an appearance of constant activity to the public squares, the white marble benches beneath the trees a sense of the dignity of human nature in the country to which they came. Peggy adopted it forthwith, though the *posadas*, or public inns, she thought incomparably dirty and squalid in comparison with her father's Franklin House.

Soon after they found lodgings, Eaton dispatched a letter to the American Legation in Madrid, announcing his arrival. Ex-Minister Cornelius P. Van Ness was waiting to turn over Legation affairs to him. Eaton wrote to expect him shortly.

Shortly, however, he found that travelling anywhere from the coast to the center of the country was bound to be a matter of tur-

moil. Cadiz was in a state of siege. Cafés clacked with enflamed oratory. A great popular tumult arose for the adoption of constitutional rights for the people and moderate sovereignty, while two-thirds of Spain was in convulsions at the desperate warfare between Carlist and Cristino factions. The roads, infested with guerilla bands, were utterly unsafe for travel. Without compunction for time taken from official duties, therefore, they made the pilgrimage to Port Mahon, out of the fighting range.

The American Consul at the naval station led them to the small cemetery. Timberlake's resting-place lay within sight and sound of the sea, as he might have wished. A "handsome monument," erected by his brother-officers of the "Constitution," marked his tomb. That pilgrimage publicly made, Peg turned the children's attention, as well as her own, to the play spirit of the Spaniards.

Despite war and hardship, the people were gay and polite. Music and motion, Peg's dearest allies, were here national characteristics. With all her own vitality she confirmed that "the Spaniards are the most remarkable people in the world for a natural and inherent propensity to dance, and have the most graceful movements and manners." To the staccato vibrations of the omnipresent castanets, the stately yet sinuous bends of the body, and the dramatic progression of their original folk dances, she gave enthusiasm.

While the Eatons lingered in Cadiz, where Peggy's unrestrained curiosity about a life so different from her own made her colorful, too, ex-Minister Van Ness waited most impatiently for them in Madrid. Van Ness, who was ousted to make room, first for Postmaster Barry, who died *en route*, and then for Eaton, was in no mood to tarry. He decided to deliver the Legation to Arthur Middleton, Secretary, "since it was well understood . . . that a new minister had already arrived at Cadiz. . . . The Spaniards are quick of perception, and understand things with facility that relate to personal character. Already has the impression taken root, even up to the head of the government, that Mr. Eaton is wholly destitute

of talent; and already, too, is it understood *who*, and *what*, is the real Minister, and that the sett have been sent to Madrid *as the last resort*."

Peggy was not to be free of American critics—even abroad.

Mr. Van Ness did not confine his complaints to Peggy, or to innuendoes, for he describes Middleton not only as scheming to oust him but as a "selfish, malignant and treacherous man . . . a bad Secretary from . . . want of industry and business habits. . . . He is, besides, from his ridiculous and outlandish manner of dressing himself and wearing his beard and hair, universally an object of disgust, if not hatred; and he is known by the name of *the wild man of the woods* (El Hombre de los bosques). Among the diplomatic corps he is an object of ridicule and contempt. There is no boarding house that has been willing to be long troubled with him; and even the newspapers occasionally exercise their satire upon him."

The newspapers were under rigid censorship from the Crown, so reason for the satire is palpable in the further comment that "independent of what I have said of Middleton personally, he has been an open advocate of the most revolutionary doctrines." It hardly sounds like the American Minister! Despite these severe opinions, Van Ness left the Legation in Middleton's charge and says that within but four weeks, he afforded everyone "rare sport" by distributing cards with large "guilt letters" announcing himself as "Chargé d'Affaires of the U. S. of America." Van Ness, if Eaton had treated him properly, meant to give him "a good start" by advice for the success of his mission. He never gave it.

When the Eatons arrived, after comparative difficulties encountered at Seville, the two hundred thousand inhabitants within the mud-wall of Madrid were in an uproar. The Pretender Don Carlos' forces, after having come to the gates of Madrid and voluntarily retreated, were now defeated at Bilboa by the Queen's general. The Carlists were doomed, the Crown saved for Queen Isabel. It

was the first semblance of stability the Crown knew in several years. No matter how long the Civil War was now protracted, the population had shown itself preponderantly pro-Isabel, though it strongly disapproved of Queen Cristina because she lived openly with a handsome young man named Munoz.

In the uproar of royal victory, it was hard to find lodgings to accommodate the official representative of the United States. Soon, however, the problem was solved.

"We resided in the beautiful home of the Duke St. Lorenzo. His Duchess had just died when we reached Madrid," Peggy explained when describing her Spanish sojourn as perhaps the happiest time in her life.

The proud independence of the poorest of Spaniards, the nobility and joyousness which characterized their demeanor, and their group participation in national pastimes all pleased Peggy. The women were to her liking, too: dignified, not stiff; graceful, not mincing. So were the men with their cloaks and courtliness, their emotional sensibilities and swiftness to the sword! Peggy loved Spain and showed it openly. And the Spaniards, quick to sense admiration, returned her regard with gusto.

Soon, the monotonous ocean voyage, the aftermath of the visit to Timberlake's grave and her stiletto-like participation in the quick life about her began to tell on her at last. She grew languid, in one of those periodic lapses that were natural to her, presumably normal demand for restoration of energy. When the Queen gave a great court dinner to her victorious General Espartero, Peggy was somewhat reluctant to go. She was too tired. Eaton, however, thought refusal would be neither polite to royalty nor even right as his country's representative.

"I kept hoping that my dress wouldn't come from Paris," Peg related, "but it did come, a beautiful pale blue velvet . . . made so small that I could only wear it by the old fashion of fastening my corset lace to the bed-post and walking away from it."

Thus corseted and clad, she came to the Palace. Unlike the

White House, its spaciousness was used as setting for a flowing panorama. Room after room was filled with wild and exotic flowers. Among them hung gold cages with many singing birds. In centers rippled perfumed fountains, and softly to one side played bands of music. The birds, multicolored and darting boldly between the bars of the golden cages, captured Peggy's interest. While she stared in fascination at the whirl of one's wings, she was startled when "the doors of a great drawing-room flew open and disclosed the Queen standing in her state robes."

Ah, that was an entrance, admired Peg. As always, her interest shifted quickly from nature to human nature. This was the Queen of Spain. Why, she was lovely, and (endearing her to Mrs. Eaton at once) lively. Peggy liked her. She was enjoying the dinner despite her reluctance to come, when suddenly the physical self-torture to which she had subjected herself by overtight lacing had its effect. She fainted.

"It was an innovation. No one else had ever been known to faint away at a royal dinner party. The barriers of Spanish etiquette had never been so far carried away as to allow anyone to leave the table before the Queen rose."

"It cannot be done," said the ladies-in-waiting; "such a thing was never heard of."

"But it must be done," said General Eaton, "my wife is ill and must go home." He spoke to the Queen, who granted them permission to retire. Even if she hadn't, there is no doubt but that Eaton would have hoisted Peggy in his arms and carried her home. His reason was as much anger as affection, for when she disrobed, he took a knife and tore the tight blue velvet gown to shreds. Peggy put the pieces away in memory of her first presentation at Court, and later remodeled them into a Mayday costume for one of her grandsons. She donned another dress and they returned to the Palace.

For the second time in that eventful evening, "Spanish court etiquette was shaken to its foundations . . . this time it was General



MARIA CRISTINA, QUEEN OF SPAIN

Peggy's royal friend and confidante.

Eaton who achieved that result. As they were making the grand tour of the rooms, the ermine mantle worn by the Queen slipped from her shoulders and fell to the floor. There it lay. No one attempted to pick it up. The official whose special prerogative it was . . . seems not to have been on deck. General Eaton, with the ready and sensible politeness of an American gentleman, replaced it, and received a gracious acknowledgment of his courtesy from the Queen. Afterward one of the ladies told Mrs. Eaton that such an occurrence had never been known before."

Afterward, Peggy remarked: "But the Queen was very fond of General Eaton."

But meanwhile, the Queen, herself a Neapolitan Princess of spirit with "fascinating voice . . . bewitching manner . . . and siren smile," singled Peggy out at once for an intimate friend.

They were sisters under the skin, the Queen and the American Pompadour. From childhood, spent in a dissolute court at Naples, Cristina had had her amorous experiences, but knew herself, in the end, destined for a King. Then, when she found a courtier who more completely fulfilled her nature than Ferdinand, she dared to live with him. After performing her regal duty in bearing the Crown a successor, in unattractive but legal Isabel, she felt her life her own. Even as Queen, after Ferdinand's death, she married Munoz, against the outcry of the populace, and bore him handsome children.

At the time Peggy arrived, the Queen held the throne as Regent for her small daughter, Isabel, controlled the armies and her ministers, and made her home in the Palace with a gentleman not of noble line. Peggy liked her spirit in ordering her life as she willed it.

Too, they were very much the same type of woman. Both attracted numerous men, and on the surface, were attracted to them for decided qualities. But, essentially, both were extremely monogamous, concentrating, in all their fiery flirtations, on the one man who could come to their measure in tenderness and spirit. Both

made virtuous early marriages and then cast aside convention in favor of a more deliberate choice. Neither wilted under the public opprobrium attendant upon her acts, but bore herself with arrogant disdain toward conventional critics. Yet each was singularly warm-hearted in championing another of the same stature.

Immediately upon their meeting, Peggy and the Queen unbent to each other. Indeed, on her first appearance, Peggy was a personality at court. The President's favorite became the Crown's favorite.

Only the Americans present seemed prone to criticism. Van Ness wrote new President Van Buren about the pair whose feminine member had made him achieve that state that "I find I was mistaken in saying that he (Eaton) wanted to do nothing but sit by his fire and chew tobacco. It appears that he and *she*, together, regularly dispose of two bottles of rum (of the strongest kind in the spirit) every three days; that is 4 glasses each every day, besides wine; and while they are taking it, and he chewing, she smokes her *cegars*."

Not content with disclosing gossip of the cafés where American *habitués* gathered. Van Ness draws back the curtain on their private affairs. "They began very lovingly with Middleton, he living in the same house with them, and paying a certain sum per day, but there has already been a breaking up . . . he has separated and gone to another place to live. . . . As soon as they arrived here Mrs. Eaton, and indeed her husband also, set about making a match between the daughter and Middleton, but Miss Virginia said she was determined to marry a *man*, and not a *monkey*; and I think she said. [Poor Van Ness was in reality admiring the O'Neale impudence without recognizing it.] . . . They were, however, so determined upon it that both of them one day fell foul of the poor girl, boxing her ears, until the *Negro* they have brought with them interfered and induced them to stop. Giving up all hope of success, from that moment the treatment towards Middleton was changed into rudeness until he was entirely shaken off.

"You may be sure that I don't mention this because I have any

sympathy or respect for Middleton; and I am glad that he has come off in this manner. The young lady says she is determined to have a young man who offered himself to her at Cadiz; I believe it is a young Englishman. But Mrs. Eaton has already proclaimed it to all with whom she talks in Madrid that the *new* President of the United States offered himself to Miss Virginia, and presented his suit in the presence of General Jackson, but that she utterly refused him, much to his chagrin and mortification. The Americans who are here have amused themselves heartily upon this story."

New President Van Buren, long a widower, must have been amused at the gravity with which Americans, even abroad, were then apt to treat matrimonial matters, for undoubtedly he had played cavalier to Virginia purely as a social pleasantry, and Peggy was playing upon it with her usual flamboyance.

Though Van Ness had withheld important information necessary to the success of the American Minister of the moment, Eaton seemed to fare fairly well. At twilight three days after Christmas 1836, when he presented his official credentials to the Queen in language ceremonial enough to capture the court at Madrid, then the most formal in Europe, she was glad the sentiments were "renewed by means of so worthy a representative. . . . It affords me pleasure to extend to your Excellency a favorable reception, and to exhibit to you the esteem which your countrymen deserve at my hands."

Reprinted in American newspapers with a flourish, reports soon filtered through from foreign sources that the Queen had singled out Peggy Eaton as a companion, and gave Virginia Timberlake, in her radiant beauty, precedence over all the lovely ladies at Court. Never before had an American woman's charms or capacities actively influenced the amity between the two countries, as in this instance. If Eaton was officially known as the Minister Plenipotentiary, Peggy privately bore the other half of the title: Envoy Extraordinary.

It was not long before Peggy had half of Europe and all of America embroiled in an international prank. But three months after their arrival, the eyes of all nations were focused on Spain, for a rumour had gone abroad that England was to make a loan to the Spanish crown on condition that she receive the net income of the island of Cuba, and occupy it.

This alarmed the United States, put France on the scent of an unholy alliance, and other countries on the *qui vive* for new imperialistic English ambitions. And Peggy, none less, was at the bottom of it, according to Van Ness, who remained in Madrid solely, it seems, for the purpose of reporting all her doings.

"The whole affair is a hoax," he reported. In explanation, he offered, first that "Rothschild's agent at Madrid is a German who lives in the same house with another German, and an intimate friend, who is the correspondent for the *Augsburgh Gazette*: the latter frequently dines in a public eating house in company with Mr. Townsend (an attaché of the American Embassy). Townsend is very inquisitive and prying for news, and once or twice had gotten something out of the German with regard to Rothschild's operations, though he had misunderstood him as to the Island of Cuba.

". . . Mr. Eaton arrived here, and soon afterwards dined with his family at the house of Mr. O'Shea, an Irishman in business here, where they met Mr. Villiers, the British Minister. It appears that Mrs. Eaton, who has taken the diplomatic concerns of the United States into her own hands, immediately attacked Mr. Villiers about the Cuba affair; and within a day or two it was reported from the Legation that Mrs. Eaton had *fished* Mr. Villiers, and . . . that there was a strong probability of the truth of the story. This came to the ears of Mr. Villiers, who observed that he was willing she should always fish him in the same way; and in order to carry on the joke with her, it was planned . . . that, through Townsend, they should give her a good dose.

"The Agent . . . gives his directions to the other German, who

then goes to meet Townsend, and tells him a story even stronger than Townsend had in the first place mistakenly understood from him. Upon this, they were all convinced at the legation that Cuba was to be ceded to England, and that it was a fine subject to make a display upon."

While Van Ness labelled the report "so absurd that no person of common sense" could credit it, much excitement ensued both in France and America. King Louis Philippe "fished" Lewis Cass, American Ambassador in Paris, who wrote the President that Eaton had not informed him yet as to the verity of the affair but court conversation had it that "Mr. Eaton had presented an energetick remonstrance against the projected arrangement, which has had the effect of delaying, if not preventing, it."

Before long Van Ness had to admit that England had really made such overtures, and before long the United States was offering to buy Cuba herself.

Peggy's prank had its ultimate solution in the Spanish-American War.

Peggy was happy. In Madrid she was enjoying her double triumph of political and social influence.

"There, thank God, I was beyond the reach of venom. . . . Middleton . . . remarked that my name was always referred to in the cafés and public places in terms of greatest respect." It was a new experience for her. Instead of being publicly condemned, in Inquisition's cradle-chamber, she was commended.

But perhaps their most real respect came from her aspect at the bull fights.

"At the first one, we were chaperoned by Lady Carmine, who was a sister of the Duke St. Lorenzo. She carried with her all sorts of perfumes, a thing afterwards never neglected by us. The Queen was present and gave her royal consent for the bulls to be killed. During this fight not one of the bulls were killed but four men—*matadores*—were carried out of the arena dead. Our colored coach-

man was present, and he literally turned as white as a sheet. General Eaton himself was a good deal affected, and nearly fainted away. I showed symptoms of alarm, too. The Spaniards were perfectly delighted to see us so badly frightened, and went wild with waving of handkerchiefs and clapping of hands!"

The coachman, only several generations removed from cannibalism, fainted at the animals' ferocity; Eaton, of civilized English heritage accustomed to the hunt, swooned from the human loss, but Peggy viewed the spectacle—arena, animals, *matadores* and all—as a fascinating pageant, pantomimic in import, in which force and skill vied.

Another aspect of coquetry with animal spirits common to the Spaniards which Peggy observed with delight was the ceremony of the fan. "I gave many balls, some very grand ones, which all the nobility attended," she bragged, depreciating, in her next sentence, the entire set. "But you ought to see those high-born dames handle a fan. They can fairly make one talk outright."

The people with whom Peggy mingled in Madrid led an easy, luxurious life, full of pleasure. In winter, opera flourished; in spring and summer, there were the bull fights and the circus. Theatres never closed for season, or for lack of sizeable audiences. In the cafés surrounding the large square poetically named The Gate of the Sun, *habituées* prolonged the closing hours until far into the morning, when tinkling mule bells began to be heard. Newsboys shouted new editions throughout a long evening.

During fashionable hours after the siestas, the broad Castilian Fountain Drive was thronged with "sumptuous equipages with polished grooms." Their occupants were conceded handsome and well-dressed—the latter sometimes attained by semi-starvation at home. They were proud and formal people, difficult to outshine in splendor, and hard for an outsider to attract.

Yet they swarmed to Peggy's parties. When Ministress Eaton gave a grand fete, Madrilian nobility outdid itself in attendance. Here no ladies lifted pinched nostrils at her approach, nor did dance

circles vanish in the thin air of a concerted attempt to disconcert. Here Peggy's quick eye and slippery tongue made her a social favorite. Her buoyancy became a magnet for indolent courtiers. Not without pride, the gentlemen of Madrid referred to her as Pompadour Peggy. The Irish banker, O'Shea, benefactor of George Borrow, who was then wandering through Spain, had vicarious pleasure in claiming Peggy as Irish as she was American, which couldn't be denied by her sparkling blue eyes.

What would Washington have said to have seen Peggy as an important social pivot in Madrid, where a woman who was clever enough to mix in politics was welcomed? Probably only that nothing better could be expected with such a Queen at the helm, a Queen who picked Peggy Eaton as friend! Secretly, Peggy pined for Washington's contention. Her brilliance was becoming a by-word in European capitals. It was almost a convention to toast the American Pompadour.

But once again, with every triumph, death intervened to dull her edge of excitement and level values to their true light. While Peggy was abroad proving herself capable of becoming the favorite of royalty as well as of the head of democracy, and using her energetic talents in an atmosphere that applauded, not anathemized, them, her father, from whom she inherited this endowment, suddenly fell sick and died.

Peggy wanted to return to America immediately, but Eaton persuaded her to stay. There was nothing she could really do for the O'Neales. Wouldn't she like to visit Paris before she returned? And what about a ten weeks' journey to Athens and Constantinople? Somewhat wearily, she acknowledged a desire to see these Old World cities. But Eaton knew her very well, and pitied her profoundly. Her lust for power always had its lethal end in so dramatic a fashion that she was let down, and had to rebuild strength for re-assertion. It was not long before he was writing the State Department for permission to take the East European trip, and asking, at

the same time, whether he might leave his mission at any time and return to the United States by giving three weeks notice, without waiting for the tedious business of confirmation.

Spain had lost some of its savor. The Constitutionals had coerced Queen Cristina into accepting a mild compromise of citizenship for property-owners. "Tomorrow the long agony ends," wrote Eaton. "At six o'clock, the Queen, in presence of the Cortes, swears to support the Constitution. For days past, laborers have been engaged, spreading awnings over the streets thro which she is to pass . . . and the whole population is to be out, in grand procession, to witness the important ceremony. . . . It is a matter about which the people know & care nothing; & they are in no condition of mind or body . . . to understand it."

Spanish monarchs had indulged such a "saturnalia of reaction" for several centuries, with the notable exception of one ruler whose efforts at popular education were frowned upon by ruling classes and clergy, that the people of the Peninsula had grown almost indifferent to rights or wrongs, except for some fiery Nationalists who were purged of their strength in exile. A succession of them had been placed in power in the Ministry and failed to accomplish in practice what they flaunted in oratory, thus effectively ridiculed in the eyes of the people. The leaders were in advance of their time, for the bulk of the Spaniards were not yet ripe for self-government.

Everything in Madrid became increasingly expensive. Necessities were few; luxuries were scarce. When the American Legation served as neutral shelter during a siege, the Queen sent Peggy provisions from her own stores. Just to maintain the Legation's business, Eaton was spending more than Congress allotted him. The Rothschilds were constantly curtailing his account and deducting money from his private funds. It was vexing. Furthermore, though he was willing to spend any amount to lift Peggy out of her mourning for her father, by diverting trips on the Continent, it was impossible.

" . . . At present to approach, or retire from the Capital, to any sea-port, is equal to a trip thro the Seminole country in Florida,"

Eaton discovered to his dismay. . . . Outrage and violence are so common that there is no venturing with a family a league beyond its walls."

Wrapped in coarse blankets, the beggars of Madrid were increasing daily, and daily more indifferently asked for alms. While Ministry after Ministry tried its power to please the people of Spain, Queen Cristina was already scheming for the marriage of her daughter and secretly working against the Liberals. Amid the disorderly rabble, Peggy longed for home, where parties at least defined their policies.

Before Eaton could give his three weeks notice, he was informed by the State Department that it had decided to entrust the Legation to a *Chargé d'Affaires*, since business with Spain did not warrant the maintenance of full-fledged Minister. Accordingly, he was hereby relieved of office. In reality, Van Buren was paving the way for Washington Irving, whose books on Spain were enjoying a vogue.

But Eaton felt no resentment, as his predecessor had done in mouthing imprecations against the body politic. "My recall," he wrote to the President, "has given me no concern, for to displace officers at pleasure, is a prerogative, a right of the President, and whether with, or without cause, matters not." He did, however, object to the summary accounting of the officious Rothschilds. He had spent his own money for public upkeep and yet they deducted small drafts from his personal account. He let Van Buren know his attitude about money matters then and there. His private views were reserved for a later hour.

Virginia Timberlake was the only one who had objections to returning to America. She had no ties there, and liked life on the Continent better. But the family insisted that she return. Peggy went to the Queen, and told her that soon they would leave since the United States saw fit, for "public good and service," to entrust affairs with a *Chargé*. Then, answered the Queen, we will have only a *Chargé* at Washington. Immediately, she ordered the Spanish Minister's recall.

Since the roads were infested with brigands, the Queen offered an escort of royal troops to get the Eatons safely to the coast. It was planned that they go to Pau, in the south of France, and let Eaton follow in time to board the "Great Western," which would bring them back to America by June, 1840. Peggy accepted with pleasure. What a flourish she could give her departure from Spain, then! And she only needed that story in Paris to make her the reigning success.

When the royal guards were ready, surrounding one of the royal coaches in which they were to ride to the sea, the Queen held a farewell audience for Peggy. Drawing "Ginger" and Margaret toward the throne, she astonished the assembled courtiers by a command to her plain, sallow little daughter, Isabel, the real Queen of Spain, and her prettier Infanta, no doubt the daughter of Munoz.

"Kiss los Americanos," she said to them, "for nothing so lovely has been seen at the Spanish court for many years, nor will be."

As the blond sailor's daughters sailed away with first honors in competition with a Queen, Peggy and Queen Cristina exchanged glances. They understood each other, for both had a kind of courage that recognized openly beauty by divine right.

BOOK VI: A STAGNANT POOL

BOOK VI

A STAGNANT POOL

I.

WASHINGTON greeted Peggy as guardedly as the Queen of Spain had been spontaneous. So she buckled up her armor, flecked a fashionable flounce brought straight from Paris, and let them know she was in town. With startling rapidity, she was revived—ready for her next round with the ladies of the unyielding Capital. Her foreign triumphs were as leaven to the ferment against her. What profiteth a prophet's honors if they be not in his own country? Those who formerly refused to recognize her either personally or as a power drew the lines tighter still. She was past forty and should learn to settle down, and not go around with the giddiness of a girl. Why, she didn't even give her own daughters a chance to shine! How did she ever expect her beautiful Virginia to marry when she still held court herself? It was shameful. Most of the women of her age were already grandmothers.

But Peggy had food for speculation aside from domestic affairs. A Presidential contest was close at hand. Martin Van Buren, who became President by his patent preference for her company when most men were freely against her, was now running for re-election. During the Eatons' absence in Spain, the United States had suffered a severe financial panic, undoubtedly a reflex from Jackson's withdrawal of government deposits from the United States Bank, which he considered allied to manufacturing interests to the detriment of agricultural pursuits. Now when the pocketbook is pinched, men find allegiances other than those perpetrated in prosperity. The Democrats, with Van Buren in power, were plainly to bear the brunt of the country's indignation. The Whigs were sure to win with General William Henry Harrison as warrior-candidate.

Whether it was Eaton's hidden resentment at recall, his desire to swell the winning tide so that he could swing back into office, or simply a matter of personal animosity, the bald fact remains that he came out openly for Harrison as against Van Buren.

The Whigs, overjoyed, rushed at so celebrated a convert. In fact, they made a public example of the proselyte in party presses. Democrats, who but a decade before were looked upon as uncouth farmers without knowledge of government, now offered the country a Knickerbocker aristocrat, while the moneyed party, profiting from their lesson of a plain man's popularity, put forward a Western farmer symbolized by a log cabin and keg of hard cider. It was hilarious with double *entendre*, like a play within a play with actors changing sides. Since most of those who voted for Andrew Jackson were inclined to vote for another popular General, campaigning was a jolly affair, and in the conscious freemasonry of superior persons fraternizing for a vote, Peggy became a popular hostess with the very side which, ten years before, had so vilified her.

With her customary pleasure in the dramatic, she could not help crowing. In their commodious home on I Street near Twentieth, in reality one part of the renovated old Franklin House, she now held salons for the select. Perhaps her intimacy with royalty had made her conservative, as it has a way of doing. Perhaps she was really getting older and wished more solid companionship, vested in the moneyed classes. Or perhaps she was only enjoying another act in the drama that was her destiny.

Harrison was elected, and harmony dwelt within the Eatons' Colonial doorway. However, but one month after Inauguration, the President died, and John Tyler, as Vice-President, succeeded him.

In the Democratic camp, all eyes focused on Eaton. Which way would he now turn, "the apostate"! He stuck with the Whigs. Jackson, who charitably hoped that Eaton might have been favoring a fighting man, instead of a practiced politician, merely as a principle of democracy, just as he had favored him over John Quincy Adams, then became bitter. Wasted by diseases left over from his

fighting days, Jackson was dying slowly. That Eaton, his bosom friend and filial disciple, should have switched fully to the enemy's tent was too much. Slowly, the ex-President turned his former protegee's portrait, hanging at the Hermitage, to the wall.

Eaton got no official position in exchange for his retrenchment. Peggy had to content herself with the remnants of an ex-officio dignity. General Eaton, as he was now called for want of other titles, returned to his practice as a lawyer and was listed in the city directory as ex-Secretary of War. All his colleagues of yore were in the legislative bodies, busy with tariff problems and the annexation of Texas, which had declared itself a Republic, free from Mexico, with none other than his old friend, Sam Houston, at its head as President. Things were stirring and Eaton sat by. The West was opening up, and overland trails on which hardy settlers trekked toward the Pacific were lures for traders. Eaton's adopted Tennessee by now became the midlands instead of the outlying border of the country. Here they spent their summers, while Washington remained their winter headquarters.

Mrs. O'Neale, an active widow, took charge of their affairs when they went West. She refused to live with them, however, saying that she preferred her own home. "Ginger" was so much like Peggy in spirit that Rhoda O'Neale often wondered that she hadn't done something drastic with her life. She paid such scant attention to suitors who measured her beauty for secluded domesticity.

One of the most popular debutantes of Washington, "Ginger" was considered by many as one of the most beautiful women in America. More like her grandmother, she was "proud and haughty." When a passionate lover put in appearance in the person of Philip Barton Key, Francis Scott Key's son and Washington's District Attorney, her reserve was proven only a barrier erected for those she meant to reject. Key was "handsome, dissolute and reckless."

Peggy opposed their marriage "on the ground of his dissipation." Several elopement attempts ended in frustration, for Peggy kept a watchful eye on them, just as her own parents did years before on

herself and Captain Root. Mrs. Eaton had good reason to regard the distraught lovers with wariness.

Once when Key called on Virginia, Peggy sent down word that her daughter was sick and could see no one. Sick, and she couldn't see *him*? *His* love lay in pain and a third person would prevent their meeting! He flung the doors wide. The servant instinctively stepped aside as he set spurs to his horse and rode right up the stairs to the room where she lay ill. Determined to carry her away, then and there, he was daunted only by Peggy's will-power. Virginia would readily have gone with him. But Peggy resisted him as son-in-law, handsome though he was and happy though they seemed together.

"Perhaps I should have let those two, who loved each other so well—it was adoration—be married," Peggy said long years after it was all over, "but how could I when he was so dissipated? I have seen him go to the side-board and take a glass of brandy at a draught, and then another." She probably visioned another, and another, and thought of Virginia's father, Timberlake. She then believed she was right in preventing a headlong marriage with such a man. Wouldn't he grow more dissolute with the years? She reasoned with Virginia.

At length, the affair was broken off, and after "a brilliant belle-ship" in Washington, Virginia married the Duc A. de Sampayo, Secretary of the French legation, and went abroad to live. There she was known as a "haughty and dignified woman." Perhaps she had again drawn reserve's cloak about her. Even with it, "the beauty which seems to have been a family trait won her a fame throughout this country and Europe."

Who shall say whether her reserve was broken when she heard that Philip Barton Key had fallen by the hand of an avenging husband?

Peggy, too, withdrew. She became what they all wished of her. Perhaps "Ginger's" violent love affair wearied her, or perhaps one

of those recurrent lapses lulled her from activity, but she sank into the background while Margaret, her other daughter, made her *début*. Less outspoken than "Ginger," Margaret had a delicate charm of her own. Its special quality is perhaps best communicated by the observation that one never thought to call her but by her full name. One Peggy was enough for the Eaton household, as "Ginger" demonstrated by her withdrawal.

But Margaret must have had some of her mother in her, for at the same age, she, too, married a sea-faring man. He was Lieutenant John B. Randolph, of Annapolis, a Randolph of Virginia, one of the oldest and most clannish families in America.

Shortly after the wedding, which wore Peggy out, the Eatons went west to Franklin. There Eaton had occasion to sort old papers. Among them he found many relating to Jackson's political life which he thought the old man might wish to include in correspondence he was preserving carefully for posterity. Perhaps actuated by the same motive, Eaton wrote him, enclosing his find, and asking Jackson to forward all the mass of writing on Mrs. Eaton's virtue, and vice-versa, which had been so arduously collected by enemies and friends alike.

Jackson complied, and forgave Eaton his political apostasy. They went over to the Hermitage to see him, and found the old General in the maturity of his powers but perceptibly lowering in vitality. Then Peggy perked up again. With all the wealth of her magnetism and drollery, she mimicked contemporary Whig leaders, life in Spain, his old enemies and his old friends with an enchanting contagion until Jackson took them back to his heart, with two-fold thankfulness that he'd done so before death.

This was not long delayed, for one day in June, 1845, a slave from the Hermitage ran to Major Lewis with news that the General was dying. He wanted Major Lewis and Eaton to come at once. An underground current, fruitful as earth itself, spread the news. . . . When Sam Houston, President of Texas, rushed to his adored com-

rade's bedside, it was Peggy who opened the Hermitage door to him. She told him he had come too late. All was over on earth for one of its most meteoric men.

Since she was no longer the political target for rival party factions, no newspaper printed the fact, and no one really cared that Pompadour Peg stood guard at the dead President's bedside.

2.

All seemed to be over for Peggy, too. With Jackson's death, an order clamoring rights for man closed. The struggle was now between the rapidly industrialized North and the cotton-gin South. Slavery's struggle began to show its claws, more for business reasons than humanitarian ones. And what business had Peg with sectional strife? She subsided.

The country re-echoed with wild-fire talk of rivers of gold rushing through California, and wild-cat schemes took many solidly settled citizens West. The gold-rush left Peggy indifferent, for she was not avaricious, but what would happen to the onrush of immigrants who left Europe behind in the endless quest for an Eldorado?

Life was dull, decidedly dull. There was nothing left to strive for. She was suffering from that worst germ of ennui—acceptance. Now, nobody thought to question her place in society. Was she not the mother of French nobility? Ladies who couldn't stomach her a decade before now made obeisance. Peg was bored by the alliance, perhaps because "Ginger" accepted it without objection. Dad O'Neale would have been cocky about it, but Peggy took good care never to refer to her son-in-law as the Duke, but called him "a Frenchman of distinction." She loathed the way women now referred to her as the mother of the Duchess. Her own Pompadour title was slighted in favor of "Ginger's" new aristocratic effulgence. Now "Ginger" was the ascending star, Peggy the reflection. "Ginger" drew the spark of interest, and Peggy had to warm herself in its

glow. It was damnable! She was still Peggy Eaton first; that she was the mother-in-law of a French Duke came second. But only in her own arrogance, not in the ladies' accepted scheme of things.

Peggy, though a grandmother, didn't seem much older than in her heyday. The same remarkable preservation which Daniel Webster noted about her mother kept Peg's loveliness intact. Nearly fifty, when most of her generation had lapsed into lachrymose beatitude at their progeny's progress in life, Mrs. Eaton was still sparkling of eye and wit, her carriage was still as vigorous and erect as a girl's!

But she couldn't use her liveliness any longer to any lively end. Salons were open to her but politics was closed—at least for all practical purposes. It was galling. Just as in adolescence she had believed herself ripe for marriage, she now knew herself really ripe for usefulness in politics. Men sharpened with the years. Why did people mistakenly think women dulled? She seemed doomed to retired domesticity, champing, rebellious. Eaton thought she should resign herself. But it was not in her nature.

Calhoun was then Secretary of State, but Eaton was through with running for any office. He refused to be bid on in the market place again. His pride was deepening with his years, and his real, temperamental antipathy to the political chess-board reasserted itself. In youth, he had convinced himself that man must use his energies for the good of other men. It was wrong to allow talents to lie idle, no matter how great one's contempt for competitors. It was this self-conscious urge to action which had attracted Peggy vitally.

Now he was older and knew better. It was useless to go against one's grain, one's instinct. What had politics netted him save excruciating denunciation as Peggy's husband? In private life, they would have gone unscathed, their union unnoticed. Peggy despaired of ever interesting him practically in politics again. Instead, he had turned to his books.

Eaton was ageing gracefully. Though a large circle of friends, residents of Washington for several generations, still sought him

out as choice companion because of his good conversation, his intimate friends noted a peculiar disintegration.

Major Lewis, retired to Fairfield, Tennessee, wrote his daughter that he was "not at all surprised . . . at what you say about Mr. Eaton. I have thought since he returned from Spain that he would kill himself drinking, or perhaps 'blow his brains out.' I received from him, not long ago, a very curious letter which indicated some derangement in the upper story, but still he has some method in his madness."

But if he drank to excess, it was kept discreetly under cover, for the Eatons now reposed in that respectable element of Washington society which watched President after President come and go. But it was undeniable that he was declining. When the Women's Rights convention at Seneca Falls issued a declaration of rights, he was among those who pooh-poohed woman's wholesale participation in politics as entirely unnecessary to the country's progress.

Peggy thought differently. Why shouldn't women vote? And why shouldn't they retain their property in their own name, even after marriage? But she didn't join the suffrage movement which Lucy Stone and Margaret Fuller were popularizing, despite persecution by ridicule and prosecution by law, because she was always too much the lone actor, the one person in the spotlight. They sought, shared and shouldered work for an ideal. Peggy's politics were always practical. Single-handedly, she accomplished her objective. An organized mass movement utilizing feminine tactics had too many sere memories for her. And she knew so well that feminine appeal, *pas seul*, just as in her dancing days, captivated more completely. She had the eighteenth-century outlook that woman could accomplish more under an existing order by influencing men than by her own heroic effort.

Surfeited with a peace which ill-suited her nature, she suddenly had a call to action. Her son-in-law, Randolph, had gone off to sea on his maiden voyage not long before. He contracted a fever, while

in the East India squadron, and died shortly after his return to Washington. Poor Margaret, less able than her mother to weather the gales which shook her life-mast, collapsed completely.

For months, night and day, Peggy nursed Margaret, who was haunted by the fact that her mother suffered the same fate, and that her father had lost his life at sea, too. The double tragedy took its toll on the weakest one. Scarcely eight months after Randolph's death, she followed him. Peggy had to take charge of the children.

The orphans, George Chapman, John H. Eaton, Mary and Emily Randolph, were adopted by Peggy, who reverted to a maternal solicitude for them. They were good vent for her vitality. She'd launch them in society—she'd launch the Randolphs! None of the pleasures of childhood were spared them, nor any of the arts that she herself had been taught. She bought skates for Emily, the prettiest of her granddaughters, paints for Mary, and sleds and knives for the boys. With Mrs. O'Neale in attendance, Peggy bridged the generation very well, so that the children came to her as confidante, treating her mother, who was still remarkably spry, though eighty, as grandparent.

Eaton was not less moved by them. Though he never had had children of his own, Timberlake's descendants had become genuinely his. The double penalty the sea had taken from them stirred him profoundly. Eaton had mellowed well. Nearly seventy, he was the patriarch of the local bar association, still a good comrade among men, gracious and conciliatory in discourse. In his large library, lined completely on all sides with books, and entirely bare but for a table and two chairs, he dallied with the end of his days. Here he received visitors, impressing them with the light way in which he got off incisive observations.

On a drear November day in 1856, he died, leaving Peg, besides \$70,000, his most treasured possessions, tokens of their hearty good life together: three hundred books which she probably never read, and two hundred casks of wine, which she probably consumed.

Peg was now the respected, grief-stricken Widow Eaton, in contrast to her former title of the dashing Widow Timberlake.

3.

For the second time, Peg wore widow's weeds, which accentuated her beauty. Only this time, Washington was inclined to credence her grief as genuine, although she withdrew at once to privacy. Peggy was so prostrated at Eaton's death that even two years afterward she was too ill to appear in court to swear to statements concerning his personal estate. He had left her a large fortune, as well as land in Florida. A rich widow who mourned her husband sincerely, she lived as a recluse over a protracted period. In those days, Washingtonians saw her rarely. When one caught sight of her, she was usually driving out to Oak Hill cemetery, where Eaton and her daughter, Margaret, were both buried.

In the red brick building in which she was born, she now lived a more or less matriarchal existence with her mother, who was called "one of the loveliest old ladies imaginable." As one of the last of those who survived in Washington since it was founded, the Capital still thought of her as the famous Peggy O'Neale's mother, and treated Peg as a much younger woman than she was in reality. Both of the other O'Neale girls were dead. Only John, the youngest, and Peggy, the eldest, were left. The attachment between Rhoda O'Neale and her first-born daughter was deepened. When they went to St. John's Church together, they were a striking pair.

Peggy's long life with Eaton had clarified some of her inherent, rather than easily exhibited, characteristics. More of her mother's qualities came out in her, too. She could now exist in a trance of peace with her mother, whom she admired as a splendid being aside from their relationship—for Peggy got religion.

Mrs. O'Neale's piety, given admirable utterance in language less colorful but more pellucid than her daughter's, infected Peggy in her bereavement. As that grand old lady had written Jackson just before his death, so she sincerely believed, and breathed that faith in

those about her: "How pleasant with the cares, the honors, the joys of life, all drawing to a close, to be permitted to lean upon an Almighty arm for support, & look forward in joyful anticipation to that brighter glory—those purer joys which await us in the land of rest. To the wearied & oppressed heart, to the bosom bleeding under the influence of bereavement, how animating are the hopes of a blessed immortality."

She knew whereof she spoke, brooding, for "how many of my loved ones are gone! Death has made sad havoc in my family circle, and my heart is sere and desolate. The grave has robbed me of some of my best earthly comforts, but I will not repine. My lost ones shall come back again to my embrace! The spirit forms, which seem to be about me while I write, are beckoning me away to a land where the inhabitants never die. I will try & be prepared to rejoin them, when, in the Providence of God, I am called home."

Peggy, a woman in her middle years, found religion her only avenue of escape from tameness. She now sang hymns with conviction for her mother, just as she had done in youth. When Mrs. O'Neale thought she had been sufficiently withdrawn from the world for reverential purposes, she begged Peggy to engage herself with her grandchildren again.

They were growing quickly. Emily, particularly, had a preternaturally mature look, though only ten. They went to dancing school, like all the other scions of Washington society, at Marini's on Pennsylvania Avenue, now the fashionable center of a Capital spinning dizzily to the wanton, wicked waltz. One day, when she had shed her mourning, Peggy accompanied them to a Carnival, closing event of the school's season.

Carried back to the time when she had captured the crown, first triumph of childhood, at just such a party as this, Peggy watched with pride when Emily whirled by leaning lightly on the arm of a handsome, dark youth. Her eyes trailed them over the smooth floor, and she noted with satisfaction that Emily's partner held her very gracefully in the polite posture of the day. With Mary, he seemed

just as devoted a cavalier. When he instructed the boys in propelling steps, Peggy thought they would do well to catch his dignified bearing.

At the end of one dance, the children pulled him over to Peggy. "This is Antonio, our teacher," they told her breathlessly. With evident breeding, the boy, who was no more than eighteen at most, acknowledged the introduction and gave Mrs. Eaton his last name. Buchignani. Mrs. Eaton admired the dance in its pure form, no? Yes. He saw that so easily from her eyes and the way she beat time with her toe, unconsciously. The Latin lad was acute. Yes, he was from Italy.

When he shepherded the children into new formations, they looked at him with adoring glances, especially the little girls. He won his pupils by a word before instructions began. He was quick to compliment a well-executed step, too, and that was pure contagion to the children.

Buchignani gathered the clustering Randolph clan about him for farewell. Peggy saw that they were very fond of him. When, later, they asked if they might invite him to dinner, Peggy assented, of course. He made an excellent impression on Mrs. O'Neale, and Peggy saw that his polite airs extended to the amenities of the dinner table. A good *raconteur*, he told tales of Italy to which the children listened open-mouthed. He was of no ordinary family, he intimated, though he would say no more. He especially admired the marvellous old silver Mrs. Eaton had. Evidently, he had artistic tastes and was accustomed to refined atmospheres. Peggy told him how Lafayette had been served with that same silver years before at the Franklin House. He was properly impressed.

From his dancing and personal habits, it seemed that he knew worldly ways. But Peggy saw that his clothes, though of good cut and immaculately clean, were well-worn. She had lived in a Latin country long enough to know how debonair their men could be draped in a cape over thread-bare costume, so she supposed Tony preferred his old good clothes to cheap, new ones.

Emily confided that Tonio had told her he was poor. Poor Tonio, couldn't he come to dinner more often? And why didn't Grandma give them private lessons in dancing? Tonio could teach them so much better himself. When the other children chimed in to the requests, Peggy granted both.

Each evening at dinner, both Mrs. O'Neale and Peggy confirmed that Tonio's social charm did much to make the children speak freely. He drew them out, which was good for them. Perhaps they really needed someone nearer their age. Finally, Emily broached the subject. Why couldn't Tonio live with them? There was room. He was a "stranger in a strange country, without friends." He was there for dinner and he taught them daily, so what difference did it make? Peggy listened to the pleadings but refused, perhaps because rather reluctant to arouse unnecessary gossip.

But Emily was a wilful child. She wanted her way. Again Peggy firmly refused. One day when she came from Congress, where she had gone to hear a debate, she found a trunk in the hallway. Upon inquiry, Emily informed her that it was Tonio's. She'd told him he could move in and she'd take care of fixing it up with Grandma.

Puzzled at her granddaughter's initiative, Peggy told Mrs. O'Neale. Together, they summoned the children and asked whether they really wanted their teacher to live with them. There was an immediate affirmative answer. So Peggy consented, and when Mrs. O'Neale told her that Tony had practically nothing but what he wore on his back, she told her mother to have him outfitted at her expense. After all, if he was to be her grandchildren's companion, he must not look shabby. When she told her friends about the clever dancing master to whom her family had taken such a liking, they tried to help him, too. Before long, he had a good dancing instruction business, which Mrs. Eaton allowed him to carry on in a hall she owned opposite their house. He seemed grateful and was a veritable slave to the Randolph clan, spending all his spare time with them. This left Peggy free.

Her liberation came in the nick of time. All Washington, and

indeed the country, was appalled when a Congressman, in cold blood, shot in the street a rival for his wife's affection. The assailant was Daniel E. Sickles, of New York; the assailed, who was dead before long, was Philip Barton Key, Virginia's impassioned suitor. The District Attorney this time was the victim. Another pleaded in his place, but ineffectually, for the Congressman was acquitted for defending the sanctity of his home. Peggy attended the trial, the sensation of the city during April, 1859, and was stirred to remorse. Perhaps had she allowed his marriage with Virginia, this might not have been. They had loved so sincerely, perhaps "Ginger" might have made of him a new man. She felt troubled and guilty, half-convinced that she shared the responsibility for his untimely death.

Then, as if to bury this conviction, the old Mrs. Eaton flared up again. She returned to a style of lavish living which dazzled the Capital. Her sumptuousness of wardrobe and her "great beauty which even at sixty was still remarkable" are still remembered in Washington.

"I have never seen anyone so beautiful," says an old resident; "and when she drove in a carriage with four horses and liveried servants, there was nothing in Washington to compare with her equipage, not even the President's own. She was very gay, and always fond of display."

Plainly, Peggy's interest in life had revived. Active again, her resilience having conquered her melancholy over Eaton's death and her secret sorrow at Key's end, her time and attention began to be devoted to the slavery business which was rocking politics.

4.

Peggy's interest was as much personal as political. She had launched, during her regime of rights for the plain man or woman, some of the chief actors in this struggle for rights for even humbler individuals. She saw that something was spinning in the political world which was to turn things topsy-turvy later. The anti-Slavery

sentiment within the ranks of both Whig and Democrat parties crystallized into a new party: the Republicans.

Though it gained great strength in an astonishingly short time, the Democrats succeeded in electing James Buchanan, of Pennsylvania, one of Peggy's oldest friends and admirers. The Democrats were more or less committed to moderate slavery extension, so that when Kansas and Nebraska territories were formed, things flared up in resentment.

Roger B. Taney, who had been introduced into public life by Peggy, was now Chief Justice of the United States, and called upon to hand down a decision when Dred Scott, a negro, claimed himself free once on Missouri's free soil. Yet Justice Taney declared that he was still bound, thus revoking the Missouri Compromise which maintained boundaries for slavery and non-slavery. By no interpretation of the Constitution could Congress claim the right to abolish slavery in territories, he said stoutly, sticking to infallible law which, however, in the end, must always bend to popular will. Dred Scott, Peggy noted, only brought about clearly a dreaded cleavage of the country.

It was then that two Senatorial candidates tilted slavery on a lance which, though yet confined to campaign conversation, was soon to become bloody. After Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas debated on this question out in Illinois, Peggy went down to the Capitol daily to hear Congressional comment. Disunion was coming, though Jackson had tried so hard to forestall it. When members of the Old Guard saw her in the gallery, they soon buzzed in political circles that Peggy Eaton was alive again to a new clamor in her country's claim to democracy.

The buzz became a hiss when she showed how alive she was to another clamor. In June, 1859, the wealthy widow of sixty astounded the Capital by becoming a bride. Marrying again so late in life, at least for a woman, was hardly moral. But in this case, it was downright immoral. The groom was only nineteen, none other than the Italian dancing master, Antonio Buchignani.

The priest who married them told the story all around the town. Purely as a wedding pleasantry, he remarked to Peggy the resemblance of her groom's name to that of President Buchanan.

"I might have married James Buchanan," was the firm and quiet answer, "but I preferred Signor Buchignani."

The astonished Capital could brook no conjugal comparison between the President of the United States and an unknown immigrant not yet old enough to become a citizen. It deprecated the union in unmeasured censure, and bruited it aloud that all he wanted was her dowry.

Her first epithalamium had been a cadenced song of delight. The second swelled into a fugue of disdain. The third literally belowered forth a veritable symphony of distaste.

BOOK VII: DISTURBED WATERS

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DISTURBED WATERS

I.

"EATON, about whom you inquired, died several years ago," wrote Mr. Frank P. Blair, elderly ex-editor of the now defunct *Globe*, to Van Buren. "His wife, who made his *éclat*, I believe still survives."

Mr. Blair wrote from his backwater home in Silver Springs, Maryland. When the news of Mrs. Eaton's latest *éclat* penetrated his provincialism he was as scandalized as all ardent Washingtonians. What, they all thought, that woman coming again into the cauldron of public criticism? She was crazy! The idea of flaunting time, which had been so good in making her a respected widow in respectable circles. Why couldn't she be content with conscious growth into old age, without wishing to become again a *cause célèbre*? If she must remarry, why not someone of her generation? No, not she; she must outrage society again, violate, not only convention, but decency. Well, she always was a wild one, and there's no taming her kind, if social cruelty couldn't accomplish it.

Once again, she was ostracized. General Eaton, whose attraction for her had been understood, would not have been flattered by his successor, they vouched. Why, this Buchignani was only an upstart. Nobody knew who his parents were, or what adventures brought him to the Capital as a wage-earning dancing-master. And tell it not in Gath, he was young enough to be her grandson. It was enough to demoralize her own grandchildren. Disgraceful! Three-score and a teen, when an old man took a young bride, was bad enough, but an old lady with a fresh lad was not only ludicrous but licentious. She probably courted him, and these foreign ne'er-dowells, . . . they needed little coercion when it came to advantageous alliances. That boy Buchignani probably thought dancing attendance

on a vain widow an easier way of earning a living than dancing instruction. Gentlemen privately said he'd probably pull the wool over her eyes easily, and ladies privately opined that she deserved it. The pure conceit of imagining herself attractive still! The old fool, she'd have to pay plenty to hold him. The American Pompadour title was switched, with sudden derision, to Ninon de L'Enclos.

As usual, gossip gave the converse course. Peggy had looked upon Buchignani, during the dinners he ate with the children, as a likable lad and their companion. Both her mother and she agreed that his deferential ways, polite habits, and social charm were good for the growing youth in the house.

The children all but adored him. Furthermore, he showed Peggy letters which made him out of noble birth, and confided of his engagement to a Countess, whom he would reclaim on his return to his homeland. America was a new country and much in its life was entirely novel to him. When he had seen his fill, he would like again to live in Italy. Peggy understood his double love for his fatherland and his appreciation for America. Hadn't she experienced the same feeling even while happy in Spain? He was really an ingratiating lad, simple in his unhesitating confidences to her. But the characteristic which most endeared him in her eyes was his respect and devotion to the aged, a principle, perhaps, of his paternalistic upbringing. He was extremely attentive to Mrs. O'Neale, who believed that "there was not another man in the world to be compared to him." His professions of religion pleased that grandame, too.

At her mother's urging, Peggy's mourning for Eaton grew less rigid. The Bloomer Girls were then advocating their abbreviated costume, fatuously believing that many of the "ills the female flesh is heir to arise from their mode of dress"; the Suffragettes were gaining ground, and gaslight came into common usage. When Congress was lit by the new fluid that winter, the "evenness excited admiration" and the effect was called "electrical"! The tomb of Pharaoh Amasis had been discovered in Egypt, and America, to

which archeology was as yet an unnecessary art, grew excited about his gold coffin and the thirty pieces of jewelry found buried with his body. Distractions were plenteous in the year 1859, which Walt Whitman, then in Washington, called "year of comets and meteors transient and strange."

Peggy participated in the excitement of the heavenly visitations, yet was faithful to the twin graves of Eaton and her daughter at Oak Hill. Her favorite form of exercise was walking in the lanes about the monuments of the two beings she had loved best and lost. One day when she was just about to board her carriage with the children for such a visit, Antonio asked if he might accompany them. Of course, she agreed. His demeanor was grave and gentle, from which the Randolph brood took its cue. Just as most children give way to a stranger, rather than to their family, so Tony controlled them not dutifully but devotionally.

When they arrived at the cemetery, Mrs. Eaton went to the keeper's lodge to fetch a flower pot and watering pail. Upon completing her errand, she saw that Antonio was gone, leaving the children alone. That was unusual. He said he wanted to walk toward the graves, they reported. She came upon him at Margaret Timberlake Randolph's tomb where there was a memorial from her fond mother, kneeling with "his hat off and bent in prayer." What a model youth! she thought. He not only cherished the aged and innocent children, but also the fresh memory of their lost dead. There was no denying it. It made a "great impression" on her, and her "high opinion" of him reached more exalted heights.

But she would have laughed down in scorn anyone who might have intimated that this action had aroused anything "akin to love" in her. She didn't realize that by intruding on the dead core of her former existence in this wise, Antonio was focusing her attention on himself and on the lack of a living core. The wily Italian was more ingenious than ingenuous. Of any sentimental emotions he might harbor for her, she had absolutely no suspicion. She supposed he admired her, just as she had a good opinion of him. After all, in a

way, she had been his benefactress. Through her he now had a flourishing, independent dancing academy, and was an inmate of her home in the quasi-familiar association of companion to her grandchildren.

The first active evidence of his pointed regard for her came one day when they were out walking with the children. In passing a herd of cows, of which she had always had an instinctive dread, she mentioned the fact casually.

"Fear nothing while with me," he answered immediately. "I will guard you as with my life."

The pretty speech, with its intimate implications and affectionate delivery, made her feel that he had marked her out for a very special love, utterly apart from that he gave the children and her mother. She was grateful, and went further out of her retired routine of domesticity to make him the fashion in fashionable circles.

In return for the favor, he fondly flattered her, finding her company and conversation superior to any woman's he'd ever known. She said he was too young to have mingled much in the world or known many of her sex. At which he used to smile ambiguously, so that she wondered if he were a bit older than the years he confessed. There was something immemorial in his manner to women, which she attributed to his racial heritage, never singling it out as adopted especially for her.

She was really flabbergasted when he came to her one day, humble and seemingly heart-sore.

What was wrong, Antonio?

She didn't know?

No.

Ah, that was just it: she did not notice his love.

Ah, but she did, she assured him, and thanked him for his almost son-like worship.

But it was not filial, he protested. He loved her as a man, not as a boy. Would she do him the honor, would she consent to marry him?

She marry him? But what about the Countess at home?

Oh, he had forgotten her since meeting so fascinating a woman of the world, one so wise and yet so young in spirit, so important a person with so impressive a manner (he had learned much of her past history).

But it couldn't be love like that, she protested. He was but a third of her years, had talent and ambition, and life was free for him over the whole face of the globe. She was without any ambition but to make her mother's last years happy and her grandchildren's childhood likewise so.

That was part of his proposal, he answered. Who else loved her mother as herself; who else would devote his days to the Randolphs? He would make a "good guardian for her grandchildren and manage her property with discretion and judgment."

In truth, there was no one else. No other living soul had identified his life with the Randolph orphans as had Tonio, and from all their teachers, they had certainly chosen to draw him alone into the circle of their home. About her property, she was not so sure. Furthermore, she believed with the new Suffragettes that women were quite capable of managing their own business affairs, even though married. Gently, she put Tonio off for a few days.

For several nights she did not sleep, and her days were gaunt with watch over the lithe figure of the man instead of the boy who shared the same household interests with her. Insidiously, he had gotten under her skin, and insistently her blood beat into an avowal which she would rather have denied. The delicacies of his slightest attention, in those attenuated days before she gave him an answer, swerved her respect to regard, her liking to love, and her prudence to passion.

In an autumnal blaze of betrothal, the firm cheeks under the mass of white hair flamed pink, a ready smile played about her lips, lifting the droop which had settled from the corners of her mouth, and feeling ran high through the still youthful frame. Eaton would have thought it wrong to bury this lyricism which still leapt through

her, she convinced herself. Tonio was different to John, the longest love of her life, to be sure—he hadn't his Anglo-Saxon, sustained powers for the good, nor his sacrifice to abstract principle. But what was more to the point, he had Latin temperament not unlike her Celtic one. He was convinced it was better to be happy today and mayhap miserable tomorrow, than miserable now and happy, who knows, never. All the emotions she thought tucked neatly away from disturbance welled to the foreground of her attention again, and every action she wished a negation became instead an affirmation. There was no fighting this last desire before desuetude.

When she accepted him his slumberous eyes lit up, and in the glow of his brown face flashed strong white teeth, edge to edge. In a fervor at his fortune, he caught her in his arms and whisked about the room in a waltz. Marvellous, oh, marvellous woman who was as light on her feet as a featherweight, as slenderly supple as a girl, and young enough to look the children's mother instead of grandmother. His Peg-gy. Peggy Buchignani, was it not musical?

In the intoxication of his unending tune of adoration, she struck only one material note. He was not marrying her for her money, was he?

What, he? He was wounded at the mere suggestion from the lady of his heart, the lady he loved for her *esprit* and her beauty alone.

He wouldn't mind, then, if she followed the new-fangled idea of the Women's Party and managed her own estate?

No, why should he? Life must be lovely for her and if managing her money apart from him was her wish, why that was so.

Then, would he accompany her to court to sign his agreement to such an arrangement?

Court? Why must this be done in Court? Couldn't they agree in private that she control finances? Why this bother to make public their domestic affairs?

It was not public, she explained, but a formality of the country. A married woman's property belongs to her husband as a dowry un-

less otherwise decreed by a marriage settlement. He understood what a marriage settlement meant in European countries, did he not? Well, it was the same here. He understood, and agreed to go.

The pre-nuptial contract executed but a few days before they were married is a curious document, and in the light of what followed a presentiment. All her money and property, now worth about \$90,000, was to be "possessed, owned and enjoyed by her . . . in sole, separate and exclusive use," but put into the hands of Samuel Chilton, a member of Congress from the South and an old friend, as trustee.

No doubt half of Washington which dubbed her irrational in this insane marriage business would have credited her with sound common sense had it known of this legal paper. Antonio's part in assenting would have denied their predictions that he was only a fortune hunter. Nevertheless, they were snubbed, completely snubbed, as much by former friends angry at her rash act, as by ancient enemies bearing an old grudge.

Very few of the latter were left. "The venerable Mrs. John C. Calhoun," so called by the Washington papers, was then visiting the home of her son-in-law, Professor Clemson, in the Capital, and probably muttered an I-told-you-so to Peggy's latest flamboyant adventure. Van Buren, "looking as youthful as he did twenty-years ago," according to the Albany press, lived in retirement in Lindenswald, N. Y., where he was taking stock for his autobiography of the scene in which he, Jackson, Peggy and Calhoun had been protagonists. The partial papers opinioned that he was "reaping, in his old age, the fruits of a well-regulated early life," while Mrs. Dr. Hatch, a "celebrated spiritualist" of the time, delivered a pronouncement of her profound discovery that "the essential principle of life is a sweet substance resembling honey."

Mr. Van Buren had active correspondents: there was ex-Congressman Cambreleng, who criticized poor Eaton's marriage to the lady of a household he'd used. His cynicism had fled, for he wrote that "the old lady" and he seldom go out much. There was

Mr. Blair, now a hearty grandfather, who relegated questions with which Van Buren plied him, about Peggy's part in the *Globe's* establishment, to his son, while James Parton, preparing his monumental life of Jackson, plied Van Buren with questions about Peggy's part in Jacksonian politics. Everybody who knew her of old was filing her away for future reference in historical and autobiographical works, when she startled them with the need for another chapter to finish off her tale. One or two decided to leave this last volcano of her career for a later generation to erupt.

Washington cut her dead. When she went walking or riding anywhere with her young Beau Brummel not a soul bowed. She was let severely alone. For a whole year, their parlors were closed to company, and really it was a good thing. For what would Washington matrons and men of staid mien have thought of Mrs. Eaton whirling madly round the room in Tonio's tender embrace, light-headed and light-hearted? Was she not again, as in youth, squeezing exhilaration from the dance, making mirthful over music and motion? There was no doubt about it. Peggy was playing, playing wildly. There was no pretence. She was really enjoying herself. And wouldn't everyone have made capital of that?

Hackett, the tragedian, it was rumored in the American papers, had "married a young lady not yet out of her teens" and "was sailing for Europe for a prolonged absence." Doubtless no one would have ventured a word of rebuke had he landed in England with a very young bride.

In that land where the Sovereign had Prime Ministers bouncing around her like kittens, no one as much as mentioned the fact. Even Palmerston, now seventy-six, and "happily having outlived his American prejudices," didn't pass judgment, nor did the elevated Baron Rothschild, now a member of the House of Commons, despite the unhappy prejudice against Jews.

The prejudice against what was considered Peggy's purely idiotic alliance might have hurt her, had she not been so happy. Her mother believed that all was well as long as her private account with

Heaven had its credit reckonings in her own view. She believed Tonio "to be everything that was good." Mrs. O'Neale was eighty-nine and Peggy respected her opinion as one who'd lived a long life and learned much of men. The Randolph children were delighted that Grandma had really taken Tonio into the family and despite his youth, he was paterfamilias to them all.

The first eight months of the marriage were a protracted honeymoon, for Tonio's custom at dancing school had dwindled with his notoriety. The pair was left professionally alone, but Peggy didn't mind. Mrs. O'Neale, though, felt the social sting for them and adjured Tonio to exemplary behavior in public. While she lived, he obeyed her punctiliously. But soon, in April 1860, he was deprived of her good influence.

Calling her clan to her bedside, she breathed a prayer and announced her approaching end. As if to put her house in order, it was Tony upon whom she called to give her parting counsel to care for her loved ones. With pity, he placed his hand behind her back that she might better sit up to give her last message, and thus, erect and matriarchal almost to the Biblical four-score and ten, she smiled her last sweet smile and died in his arms.

2.

At this time "the people of Washington knew Peggy O'Neale better than they did President Lincoln," wrote a secretary of Secretary Chase. "They knew of her sore trials and wonderful triumphs as a leader of society and politics . . . knew, too, whose protégé she had been and did not hesitate to handle her reputation freely."

Nevertheless, with lawmakers her reputation was slowly making its retrenchment to estimation. To everyone's surprise and not a few's chagrin, Antonio Buchignani was proving as model a husband as he had seemed a youth in Peggy's eyes. Hardly had she buried her mother before Fort Sumter was fired on, and the Battle of Bull Run fought. She would live to see slavery's end, that she

knew. Again, she became active, urging Tonio to do anything he could to serve the country.

Society decided, in the welding unity of war-time, that this mis-mated pair ought to be ostracized no longer, especially since the younger one who might pardonably have violated decency was so exemplary and decorous. Again time's attrition nullified the audacity of her acts. Again Peggy went up to Congress daily to listen to debated measures, and Tonio's eager interest at her side must have raised many a skeptical brow beneath the gas-lit dome. But before long, all was forgiven, and Peggy was taken back into the bosom of respectable society and on the fringe of officialdom's.

For her husband's appointment to office lawmakers got busy. President Lincoln offered him the post of Secretary to the Consul at Naples, believing he might prefer foreign residence. But Tonio publicly avowed that he would not think of leaving the country in time of its most vital danger. Privately, he had other plans for *Voyage en Italie*. Accordingly, he was offered a Captaincy in the Army, but that, too, he refused. There was something else he could do. He expressed his wish and got the post. He was made assistant Librarian to the House of Representatives.

Tonio was kept busy with his work, and so was Peggy, still a conspicuous figure in the Capital. She was, according to an eyewitness who used to watch her walk down Pennsylvania Avenue in those years, "a distinguished old lady . . . with an air of authority, and carried with her a suggestion of youthful grace, vivacity and beauty." The writer wouldn't have dared suggest it, but Peggy was really in her renaissance. A talented and tactful Latin lad had effected her regeneration, long before rejuvenation was the hue and cry; a lover's fervent vows, despite the disparity in their years, had revived her feminine vitality. She who had been fondled as a lovely child, flattered as a fair girl, and called fascinating as a mature woman, flourished under the florescent phrases and solid domestic devotion from a tempestuous brown-eyed boy whose life was dedicated to Terpsichore—and herself, an ardent devotee.

No wonder when she bobbed down the now built up avenues of her beloved Washington, her "unique personality excited much interest and curiosity. Her good-natured face, full of wrinkles and smiles, . . . surrounded by an aureole of white curls on which was perched an ancient poke bonnet of bygone style" shone "and by her cheek flamed a great rose as large as a peony." Peggy dared to wear the badge of her joy even though women of her years restrained themselves to sober colors.

Then, as ever, she was not unconscious of the crowd's stare, and gave the gallery as good a show as she received. "Accompanied or alone, she coursed, hither and yon, through the streets, nodding familiarly to everyone. . . . And everyone she met returned the attention and wheeled around to look at her when she passed." She was so happy in her final flare that she could not help imparting her radiance to others, just as formerly she exuded an air of vitality when she walked into her father's bar as a girl returned from boarding school.

Washington, outgrown its primary provincialism, now boasted an Art Gallery and some paved streets. Emily Dickinson, a shy New England girl whose father had lately become a Congressman, was all in a flutter over her visit at the new Willard Hotel. She and Peggy might have been each other's antithesis, except for a terseness which brought the former her future prestige as a poet, and the latter her publicity as a woman given to pithy political utterance.

As the conflict between North and South waged, so that all knew it was a war to the bitter end of slavery, Peggy had the difficult and delicate ordeal of allying the Randolph children's allegiance to the side of abstract justice. It was a task for the consummate skill of Eaton, for his slow-spoken, gentle discourse. He'd been a slave-owner, but had seen clearly enough into the future to have asked Congress for the restriction of future importation of a people put into bondage. The Randolph children were maturing.

The boys were now almost young men, and the girls growing alarmingly acute in adolescence. War time certainly sharpened

young wits. Emily, especially, was full of fire and independence, seeming more nearly "Ginger's" daughter than Margaret's. "Ginger" wrote that she had a daughter, too, but from all oversea accounts she was more docile than her American cousin, even though from a more fiery mother. The same defiant daring which impelled Emily as a mere child to tell Tonio to move his trunk in on her own authority animated her now in all her relations to people.

Since so many men lay bleeding on the battlefields, both official and society functions were at low ebb. Emily was at an age to make her debut, but each season it was mournfully put off until the next. Since her mother's death, Peggy had to pick up the matriarchal reins and guide the youth into adult state. Confined more or less to the home, restricted social life tended to make the small family interdependent for stimulus, and it was a fond group about the fireside. The boys made Buchignani their father-confessor, while the girls obviously were still enamored of his grace. Emily had no hesitancy in expressing her admiration for him, and her boldness, had it happened elsewhere than in their mutual household, might have aroused adverse comment.

Peggy was extremely happy in the harmony of her home. Tonio was too good to be true. All Washington now liked him. "His good qualities were the theme of every tongue." Peggy, perhaps in her pride that he'd found favor with the very persons who had heretofore condemned without really knowing his talents and virtues, made him a gift of a house worth about \$15,000. In order to accomplish this, she had to petition court for the revocation of her pre-nuptial contract. Samuel Chilton, the trustee, was a Southerner, "living in one of the states of the union in rebellion and hostility to the government of the United States." She found difficulty, therefore, in getting title or deeds for conveyance purposes and asked court to establish a new trusteeship in the person of Edward Swann, a resident of the District of Columbia, which was granted.

When she turned over the fee simple in the house to her husband, he expressed pleasure, but it was easy to see that he was not

overwhelmed by her generosity. He was becoming less spontaneous, more reserved, even to the children, she noticed. As if to atone for any avarice he might have unconsciously attributed to her, in arrogating her estate as her personal property, Peggy became almost profligate in the amounts of money she showered on him. He earned good money annually for his librarian's post, and always had ample allowance from the estate.

While secession's last vestiges were being effectively stumped by Union troops, its treacherous undercurrents were sucking at the roots of her own union. Emily, like her grandmother, had deliberately chosen the male members of her family as partners to her pranks. This Peggy did not consider unnatural. Just as she frolicked with her father many years before, while her mother forbore reproof, so Emily, deprived by her mother's death of a steely but tender restraint of her whims and will, now veered to Tonio with an onrush of emotion. Peggy saw it but could not reprove. However, Tonio, sensible man, seemed silently, coldly, to condemn it. When he saw her blush at his entrance to a room, he did not greet her directly, but spoke to others first. When she betrayed any depth of feeling at his departure, even for a day, he was disdainful of such childish behavior.

Peggy was very loath to believe that Tonio's composure was a mask, and that he was triply traitorous to her departed mother, Emily and herself. Because she could not bear the risk of having the fact stated to her plainly, she refrained from questioning Emily, though she did try to bolster her granddaughter's calm by quiet talks on social poise.

But Emily had plenty of time for poise. Now she was filled with turmoil of the Gods. Her nectar was her grandmother's poison. She was infatuated with Tonio, as one could see with half an eye. But then, any high-strung young girl, balked by a national war from normal social gayety and contact with sportive youth, placed in proximity to such an attractive young man as Tonio, could hardly have failed to fall in love with him. Peggy hoped doubly hard that

the war would soon come to an end, and Emily's amorous instincts be given other vent from incestuous longings. Tonio's hard, cold looks probably provoked even deeper infatuation in the sixteen-year-old daughter of her daughter, Peggy knew, but she could neither sensibly draw her husband's attention to Emily's foolhardy failure to control herself nor fan the fire by open censure. So she was silent. But she worried, and even prayed that Emily's soul might be led aright, and her heart quelled in Tonio's quarter.

Soon, she had another worry, which, worse than Emily's uncontrolled covetousness, gnawed like a vampire at her belief in her husband. One day the bell rang with violence. When the maid answered, she found two policemen on the doorsteps. Frightened, she shut the door and hurried to tell her mistress. Peggy, unaware of any cause for their coming or complaint, went calmly to the front of the house and asked their business.

She was still Mrs. General Eaton to the police force, so they inquired deferentially if she had lost any plate.

Why no, she answered. At least not that she was aware of. Would they wait while she looked through the silverware? Well, it was a good thing, she said to herself, that they had instigated her search, for she missed the silver set with which Lafayette had been served while a guest at the Franklin House, for its intrinsic associations worth more than a thousand dollars.

Briskly, she went down the corridor to tell the law's emissaries of her loss. Suddenly Tonio stepped into the passageway. Briefly, he ordered her to deny any theft; he would explain all after the minions made their departure. Though puzzled, she breathed a sigh of relief that Tonio knew all about it and would take care of the tedious business.

When the policemen had gone, Tonio told all. He'd taken the silver himself, and sold it, he confessed. He was tempted and had fallen, but surely she could forgive such a little sin. Only \$700 he got, that's all.

But why did he filch the set? If he wanted money, aside from

his own earnings and his allowance, why didn't he ask her? Did she ever refuse him anything he set his heart on? Why must he descend to the level of a common household thief, worse than the petty pilferings of any sneaky servant? Certainly, it was not compatible with his character or his position as a trusted librarian to the government.

It was sinful, he knew. It was hideous. Now when she spoke, it was hard to believe that he was ever capable of it. Couldn't she save his honor this time? He swore never to make so petty a move for ready cash again. Groaning with self-reproach, he begged on his knees for mercy. He really meant to buy it back within a week or two when his salary came through.

In pity, she adopted his plan and decided to absolve him by pretending that she didn't understand the officer's meaning. With Tonio, she went down to the Police Station where the magnificent plate lay on a table, and told officials that she had given her husband orders to sell that plate. She didn't know the officers referred to this set when they came to her house. Thus effectively, she screened him from justice.

He wore such a resigned air, and seemed to repent so thoroughly, she was not sorry she had lied. At least, not until like thefts of portraits and other plate, in smaller amounts, were constantly missing from the house, though without detection from the law. Then, she had to resign herself. It was a mania. He had all the money he wanted, and yet he did not cease stealing valuable bits. He was sick, she decided, but it was better to ignore it than create a fuss and publicly expose him. Perhaps he would come to his senses of his own accord. There was something on his mind. He was worried. She'd help him through by being silent.

Lincoln had been re-elected, though "copperheads" cried for peace at any price and thought the Emancipation Proclamation unwarranted. The Capital was safe from siege since Gettysburg dripped both the heroic blood of the invading Lee's armies and of Union troops. But in the autumn of 1864, General Lee decided to throw

panic into the Union's heart by threatening Washington again, though he was met and fought off at Winchester, not far away.

All these anxieties wore on them. Then, too, Tonio was getting tired of his work at the Capitol. He wished a change. Peggy didn't want him to feel tied to his library post when conscious of other energies. But she did balk when he told her he had received a letter from a friend named Durand, from New York, where they ought to go.

Why, New York was the place he thought he would like to be. New York was bustling. There business was real, not legislative. Durand assured him an annual income of \$20,000 by investment. The Randolph boys would have much more opportunity to branch out in the metropolis than in the Capital where they could perhaps only hope for a clerkship in some government office. He was ambitious. He would work hard, and make the income yield proportionate returns.

Please, wouldn't Peggy go? Surely, she was not bound to Washington merely because she was born there? He was unhappy in the Capital; why he didn't know. It was a monotonous and long-drawn out affair . . . this government business. Couldn't he persuade her to come?

He could. She complied, though Washington had never been monotonous for her. Her grandchildren seemed glad of the suggested change, and since they were satisfied, she felt her course right. For twenty-five years after her return from Spain, she'd lived in the same brick building on I Street, but shortly it was for rent, and all her furniture and household accoutrements on the new freight-railroad to New York.

Again Tonio had triumphed, with the Randolph brood in the balance, over Peg's preferences.

3.

They had hardly settled down in select Gramercy Park before a two hundred gun salute reverberated from Governor's Island signal-

ling the surrender of Lee at Appomattox on Palm Sunday, when New York went wild. The War, victorious for the North, was at an end. But a week later, when, at 7.30 one morning, they learned that Lincoln's life was also at an end, joy ebbed to incredulous sorrow, and when his body reached the city on April 25, they followed in the sad "five mile procession" behind his bier. The Great Emancipator had liberated slaves, but his mechanism, War, liberated a new mechanical force in the North and inter-European wars had made the country dependent on its own manufactured products.

Now, Peggy believed with Buchignani that a new era was ripening for the country. New York was vibrating with business. Men now mentioned millions "as confidently as formerly thousands." There was talk of underground or overhead traffic lines to do away with the street-clogging horse-cars. Fine brownstone mansions dotted Fifth Avenue, and Gramercy Park was the resort of the socially elect. Excellent hotels, with big banquet halls and spacious lobbies, were being built. The Hoffman House even had an "art gallery," Niblo's had "The Black Crook" and a Parisian ballet attired only in "satin slippers and a few roses in their hair"; Barnum vaunted his latest ballyhoo, and the Bowery glared with "concert-saloons" boasting jangling music, blatant gaiety and winsome waitresses. Decidedly, New York was gay.

There was the Opera on Irving Place and Theodore Thomas' concerts. Best of all, there were sprightly newspapers. Horace Greeley thundered like an Olympian from the *Tribune*, James Gordon Bennett personalized journalism with his *Herald*, Pulitzer set a new standard with his *World*, and Henry Raymond's factual *Times* could be depended upon. All carried special correspondence from Washington, so Peggy did not feel as cut off from the Capital as she had feared.

To Tony she gave \$20,000 to start his business venture with Durand. She believed that Tony had the right idea, and instinctively wished to go with the industrialized North's expansion instead of confining his efforts to Washington. She was confident that the

venture would double her capital. Everything was a bit more expensive but so much more diverting.

Emily, despite the gaiety, was gloomy. She was almost averse to answering her grandmother when spoken to, and otherwise had little to say. She was wrapped up in some mysterious inner life, of which Peggy had had intimations in Washington. Mrs. Buchignani joined the Church of the Strangers, where she was welcomed and made many friends who knew of her former fame. The pastor took a personal interest in her and suggested that she write her life story. She wished to introduce Emily to some of the younger members of her new friends' families, but her granddaughter was almost insulting in her indifference. Her conduct was certainly "strange," but Tony took no notice of it when she mentioned it to him. He seemed quite callous about Emily's suffering, really, immersed in his own affairs, which, judging from Durand's demands on his time, seemed voluminous.

If Emily was wrapped up in him, he was absorbed by business, or seemed to be, though he "grumbled a good deal about the work." When he said he needed more money to progress with his plans, Peg gave him an additional ten thousand dollars, in lumps of five thousand each on two different occasions. But this, apparently, did not suffice, for one morning he clamored for another \$20,000. She said she didn't have the ready money. He insinuated that she could sell some property, or raise funds from her grandchildren's estate. She refused, very sensibly, for he already had \$45,000 without showing justifiable returns.

He became angry, violently angry. He was her husband, exerting every effort to increase her funds through investment, following Wall Street's Stock Exchange like a hawk, and she didn't even give him credit, let alone aid. Very well, he would go, he would leave her. He would embark for Europe that very day.

She thought his threat an idle one until later in the day when she received a letter, dated from a steamer, bidding her peremptory good-bye. Beside herself with anxiety that the boat would leave the

Battery before her arrival, she hurried to the pier. Without betraying too obviously her fright at the mere suggestion of his leaving her, she implored him to return. He was obdurate. No, he needed more money, and if she couldn't see her way to help him, maybe his family at home would. He seemed so firm and resolute, she promised him half of her remaining funds, if he would step ashore at once and stay.

Somewhat satisfied, he sulkily returned to Gramercy Park with her. He'd sleep off his resentment at her initial refusal, she comforted herself, and all would be well. On the morrow she'd arrange for that money and he could go ahead with his plans.

But on the morrow she was dazed to find another letter dated off-shore, saying sarcastically that he couldn't complete his plans with the half-concessions she'd made, so he was on his way. She hurried downtown, breathless again, but this time he had really gone. She was too late: the ship had sailed.

Frantically, she went down to the office, where she found Durand. Yes, he said, gravely, Tony had told him of their difficulties and had decided to go.

But how long would he be gone, did Durand know?

As long as she refused to allow him control of the family finances, he had said. Durand had a secret address where he would receive word if his wife changed her mind. Once she did, he'd return on the next boat, he'd admitted.

Ah, that was good. She breathed a sigh of relief. Perhaps the Atlantic cable would be completed in time to send Tony a message through the waters. If not, one must write, and that would take time. Well, she'd agree. Let Durand write to Tony today. But Durand demurred doing so until the business was actually accomplished.

The next day, accompanied by Durand, she was on her way to Washington, this time in a new Pullman car with a smart diner, where they took their dinner instead of sitting by a bar on a stool.

The deeds were to be executed in Tony's name. In this way she

could comply with his demand and yet not lose money. Since Durand was acting as intermediary between them, to be fair to both parties, he'd take the deeds to his office, and write Tony that he now held them there in his name. He gave Peggy "his word of honor" that he would return them to her before Antonio's arrival so that she might have the pleasure of presenting them to him in person.

When she returned to Gramercy Park, she found Emily ill. She had already gone to the doctor, she assured Peggy. Not content with her recovery, Mrs. Buchignani paid a private visit to the doctor, who said it was incipient consumption. Timberlake had died of "pulmonary disease." Did Emily inherit it, by chance? The physician told her not to worry or fuss about her granddaughter. He had her in hand and would do his best for her. Emily looked worn and tired. Peggy pitied her but followed the doctor's orders. She would have been even more worried had she known the real nature of the illness, for she "afterwards found it out to be of more interesting character."

Emily seemed to brighten as Tony's return was imminent. The dear boy, Peggy thought, they're all so fond of him. No wonder he was roused when she crossed him. Well, that was past. Tomorrow Tony arrived. She'd go down to Durand's office and get the deeds. When he said he didn't have them, she was stunned.

Durand explained that Tony had requested him to forward them and since she had obviously wished her husband's return, at any cost, he'd done so.

But why hadn't he consulted her beforehand? She knew nothing of such a letter from Tony.

He thought it would hurt her feelings that Tony, until the deeds were actually in his hands, would not return. But she needn't worry. Tony had them with him on the boat. He'd be back tomorrow. She could then ask him his reasons for wishing them sent on.

When Tony returned, he had an explanation which sounded plausible enough. If he were to be the head of the family, then

there was to be no compromise. What if he did want all the deeds, as proof that she had allowed him to decide how profits were to be made? He had perfected a plan. Tomorrow he would go down to Washington and get the best price he could for the property. Don't sell in a hurry or you'll necessarily take a loss, she urged.

He agreed, and said he didn't know how long he'd be in the Capital to complete his business. She wished to take the trip, too, to see some old friends. But he grew angry. Evidently she didn't believe him competent to execute business after all, and merely had agreed to his demands as a ruse to effect his return? Her friends, naturally, would think that she came along to supervise the sale and couldn't leave the matter safely in his hands, now, wouldn't they? His sneers made her silent. It was plain that he was irritable. He seemed withdrawn by his absence. Very well, go alone, but don't rush the sale, she said.

In about a week, he returned, saying he'd laid the groundwork. She need have no fears. He meant to consult her; for that purpose he had returned. He'd left his trunk in Washington and hurried home to ask her advice. She approved the prices he got, tentatively, and thought perhaps that she'd been abrasive to his offended sense of dignity. Within a few days, he prepared to return to Washington to consummate the sale. He wouldn't be long. They walked in the soft shade of the Park before he left. He'd been home to Italy. It was lovely. His affectionate consideration was comparable to the first days of their marriage.

When she came home, she found that Emily had left instructions with the maid that she would not be home to dinner. Peggy thought nothing of it even though the domestic added that she'd also asked her to pack a small bag since she was to stay for a few days with a cousin in Rahway, N. J. Since her convalescence, she had often gone there for quiet. It was queer that she hadn't said anything about it beforehand this time, though. Well, she'd send a letter right away and ask her to take care of herself.

The next morning, Tony turned up. He hadn't gone after all,

but was on his way today. Didn't he leave a deed behind? After about a half-hour search he left, saying he might take a bit longer than he thought. She was not to worry. She told him to take his time. The new free postal system and the railroads combined to shrivel that, for within a few days she had word from Rahway that Emily had never arrived there on this trip. Instantly, all that had been a dark, undeveloped negative on her brain became positive. All the suspicious impressions etched upon the retina of her sharp eye had been true then! There was only one picture forthcoming. Emily had gone to Washington with Tony. But a telegram dispatched to his hotel there revealed that he had not returned at all. At the steamship office, she learned that such a dark youth and a fair girl had sailed. When she fainted, exclaiming elopement, they thought her a fond guardian outwitted. But before the day passed the whole city knew she was at once a betrayed wife and a bereaved grandmother.

All Tony's plans, then, had been a scheme, and Emily was partner to the treachery!

4.

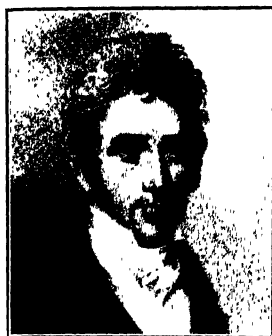
The double desertion came like a thunderclap; disillusion like bolts of blinding lightning. So the last, mad waltz had been a dizzy mirage tune, after all, and all affection merely acting?

And ah, what a good actor he was, so "outwardly cold" to Emily's palpitant fever! And, my God, what a fool she had been, she "the smartest little woman in America, sir!" She who had fascinated so many men had herself been caught in the facile net of a fortune hunter! Oh, no, it could not have been merely that, it could not! For when they were married, Emily had been but a child, a little girl of ten. Surely the first few years had been sincere, those first months of real reciprocity. It was only in the last two years, when Emily grew to girlhood, that his defection and deceit began. Why before that, he'd been her slave!

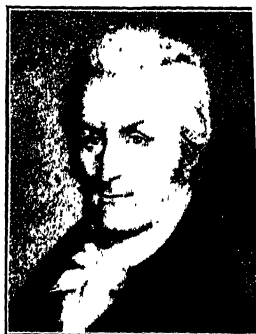
Right:
Martin
Van Buren
of New York,
Secretary of
State



Left:
John
Calhoun
of South Carolina,
Vice President



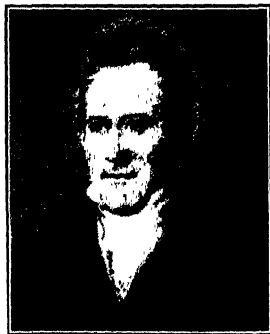
THE CABINET
PRO-PEGGY
AND
ANTI-PEGGY



Above:
John Branch,
of North
Carolina,
Secretary of
the Navy.



Above:
Samuel
Ingham,
Pennsylvania,
Secretary
of the Treasury



Above:
William T. Barry,
of Kentucky,
Postmaster-General.

Above:
John M. Berrien,
of Georgia,
Attorney-General.

Concerning Peggy, the Cabinet was evenly divided. Pro-Peggy were Jackson, Van Buren, Barry and Eaton. Anti-

Search her soul as she would, she could find no bitterness against Emily. Tony was very lovable and much loved. It was, pure and simple, a matter of propinquity. Since childhood, her granddaughter had adored Tony as her teacher in the art she loved best, and at the dawn of maturity found her feeling flowing toward him. It was morbid of her, of course. But for whatever was between them, Tony was to blame, for he allowed it, and abetted it. Her granddaughter had shown her power in taking her man from her. Time had its revenge, then. "Ginger," with all her vivacity, couldn't conquer her mother's male friends, but her granddaughter had been able to do it.

For days on end, she fell to brooding, while the telegraph ticked her betrayal through the country. Did he or did he not ever love her? That was the question which agitated her, for she found in her heart that she really loved him, whatever his vices. Not so much chagrined as cheated of her last hold on life, she became desolate. Even her favorite grandson could not coax her out of her despair. That Tony had robbed her of her entire fortune, left her penniless, was as nothing to the anxiety that he had never loved her but only used her.

The only deep anger she felt was that he had robbed her other grandchildren, for whom he had professed unremitting devotion. That her personal property was gone did not annihilate her, but that her grandchildren's money left in her care had been defrauded rendered her. The Randolphins begged her to forget that: they were able-bodied and would always support her.

But she had lost her spiritual support. Before, whenever there was trouble, she had transcended it, enjoying the very struggle toward triumph. This time, she made no effort to surmount defeat. It seemed final. A settled droop crept about the corners of her mouth. When a year went by, and the family had word that Emily and Tony had gone to Leghorn, Italy, where they lived in a castle in baronial style with the baby who had been born to the illegitimate pair, her melting brooding became desiccated bitterness.

Soon word filtered through that Tony had squandered most of the money in Continental travel and riotous living. Now they had decided to return to America. Their refuge was Canada, where Tony would invest the little remaining funds in a small business and keep going. While they flung the long accumulated Timberlake-Eaton-O'Neale-Randolph fortune to the four winds of youth, love, recklessness and irresponsibility, Peggy was living in privation. Her grandson's slender salary from his customs house post covered necessities, but no more. It was certainly a come-down—life sordid with cares.

Tony and Emily, too, were in "reduced circumstances" in Canada, where he kept an oyster saloon. She wondered if they'd give her a bit of aid if she appealed to them. But before long, she had a chance to get a practical answer to her speculative query.

In September, 1868, almost two years after the elopement, Tony came back to New York City to collect \$1,500 for his share in some smuggling business, Peggy heard. On the day of his arrival, she swore out a warrant for his arrest on charge of abandonment. That evening, Sergeant Burden, of the police force, found him at the Girard House and "removed him to the station house."

But before doing so, he brought the "unwilling captive to the presence of his wronged wife. The interview between them was short and decisive," not as the *New York Times* said, because "Mrs. Eaton was determined to make the wretch who ruined all her future hopes of happiness in this life pay the penalty of his crimes" but because he tried to use a gay and insouciant manner to make her forgive him, just as he had pleaded on his knees for mercy, with dramatic effectiveness, when he committed his petty thievery before.

During the night he offered the guard \$500 to release him, but the bribe was either too small or the officer was really honest.

When morning came, in Greeley's characteristic vigor, "police courts . . . were made interesting by the fact that Buchignani, the Italian husband and alleged swindler of the once-so-well-known

Mrs. Eaton, and seducer of her grandchild, was arraigned in Jefferson Market Police Court to answer charges preferred by her."

Jefferson Market Court bristled with reporters. Here was a story! Bennett, who knew Peggy of old, ordered his man to get the whole thing for a leader article for the *Herald*. The excitement attendant to a sensational trial marshalled all loungers in the corridors, and kept the courtroom taut.

Incredulity vied with pity on the faces of spectators, as Peggy told her story to Police Justice Ledwith and as Tony admitted all without hesitation. The protagonists stood out plainly: she was "an intelligent, well-appearing woman," he "a fine specimen of Italian, good-looking and about thirty." After the complete story of how he won her affection, absconded with her money, and abducted her granddaughter, the straight, spare, winsome-faced woman had courage enough to say aloud that she "still loved him dearly." She "didn't care about the money, he was welcome to that, but she was greatly injured by his disturbing the peace of the family by living in open adultery with one of its members."

Justice Ledwith did not share her liberality. Crisply, he gave Tony the court's sentence. He "was to pay his wife \$10.00 a week for one year."

Just as crisply, Tony refused. He had no money, he pleaded. How could he pay alimony? The Court wouldn't listen to that, especially after he admitted having deprived his wife of her fortune. He was "immediately consigned to the care of the Commissioners of Public Charities and Correction."

The *Tribune's* correspondent noted that he seemed to "treat the matter with indifference, and accompanied the officer to prison as unconcernedly as if going into a dancing hall to instruct pupils." It was evident to this onlooker that he "had no scruple against reducing his wife to almost beggary and himself to shame and disgrace."

He must, however, have had scruples against remaining in prison, for he was soon bailed by Sigismund Kaufman, a wealthy New York lawyer. With \$500 safe in the law's hands for his cus-

today, he promised regularly to pay the required \$10 per week, and was released from confinement.

Of course he didn't pay it at the end of the first week, so Peggy's attorney pressed a new charge for his arrest. As described by the *Herald*, "with a sad expression" Mrs. Buchignani appeared before Justice Dodge just a week after all this publicity and swore out a warrant for Tony's arrest on the charge of abducting her granddaughter.

The *Herald* was the one New York paper which had the exclusive story. *The World*, smarting under the "beat" by its energetic rival, soon had occasion for retort courteous. The next day it sneered in cold print that "the singular enterprise" of its rival had "seemingly had its desired effect" since Tony "no doubt received timely warning through its invaluable police columns and made good his escape."

Before the warrant was served, he jumped his bail, with the *Herald's* warning, and fled to Canada.

The newspapers would have no more on Peggy Eaton Buchignani . . . for a while.

During the hearings, Peggy had publicly proclaimed that she was willing to give Tony a divorce, that he might marry Emily. So she who was shielded from calumny by the highest authority in her country, had to shield, in turn, another. One whose good name had been disparaged in a tempest which sundered an Administration, now had to consider the good name of her grandchild. Gossip had done its utmost to besmirch her for adultery, and now it was in her power alone to make an honest woman of her granddaughter, instead of an adulteress. Strange cycles of human destiny!

She had a "horror of further publicity," but she decided to go through with the divorce. Before a year had passed, the decree was handed down by Justice T. W. Clarke, who sealed the papers. Since the defendant didn't answer the charge, he was found "guilty of the several acts of adultery therein charged" and the marriage was "dissolved accordingly."

James M. Lewis, Peggy's attorney, purposely did not put in the stricture that it would be unlawful for Buchignani to marry again. She was sincere in her desire to see Tony marry Emily, though "she loved him dearly." But the Judge saw the discrepancy, and probably suspecting collusion between the two parties, inserted the phrase which made it illegal for Tony to take Emily as wife . . . at least in New York State.

Tony did marry Emily, if only to give his name to the two children who now blessed or, who shall know, burdened the union. Peggy's husband, by Canadian marriage, then became her grandson-in-law.

Love, in all other but the passive sense, was fading to an old dream. She was seventy and was becoming, at last, a grandmother.

BOOK VIII: THE EBB

I.

HER life-flame was only banked, not extinguished. For five years after her divorce, which granted her the right to use the name Eaton again, Peggy remained in New York. Her grandson's position at the New York Customs House supported the small family. It was not entirely the line of least resistance which kept her there. Conceivably, she neither wished to parade her poverty, nor provide gossips with another chance for a finger pointing I-told-you-so. A divorcée in 1870, despite flagrant misdemeanors of an erring husband, was, after all, a divorcée.

Inwardly panic-stricken whenever she left Washington, Peggy was forced to return now by an external Panic. When Mr. Jay Gould cornered the market on gold, and drove its price up, through the good offices of the gullible Grant who ordered the Secretary of the Treasury not to sell gold, he began a national business scare which ended in the Panic of 1873. He little knew that the effects of his bulls-run on bullion would cause the rehashing of an old *cause célèbre* in which the now-destitute widow of seventy-five formerly figured.

Deflated business conditions, and perhaps a desire to see Washington again before she died, brought her back to the Capital, which she found much changed. Lady-lobbyists openly foraged Congress for railroad grants and monopolies. Carpet-bag rule with its negroid violence had prototypes, from President Grant and Ben Butler down, in power. Business houses failed rapidly in the North; in the South, plantations were literally pillaged by overtaxation and swaggering black politicians. The vast unemployed in New York

listened eagerly to communistic mass meetings in Union Square—yet third term talk for Grant sizzled in Washington.

Amid the business depression and political corruption, as blatant as it was blackguardly, Peggy found a small, respectable niche for her grandson in the very Department her best-loved husband had headed. With this sinecure in the Department of War, they thought to sink into quiet retreat in a small apartment at 338 Pennsylvania Avenue, not a fashionable quarter, but near the Capitol.

However, a romantic writer on the *Sunday Capital* caught a glimpse of a tranquil face one day and reminiscence did the rest. He was passing the Louise Home, a new charitable institution for elderly women given the city by W. W. Corcoran, the Washington millionaire. At a window, an old lady stood in the sunlight watering potted plants. He thought it was Peggy and flew to press headquarters to write a rhapsodic essay about the "good old days" and the dame who queened it over a Capital in its ante-bellum innocence, before the affray of big business trusts and graft. In the story he told how her dramatic life had been the theme for Washingtonian gossip, and then for the fanciful novelist. He heard that Buchignani had been shot down in cold blood by a Kentucky ranger, and hoped it were true that American womanhood had been at last avenged on such a scoundrel. Altogether, it was a well-written piece, with delicate play of imagination and fancy.

At least that's what Peggy thought of it, for when other newspapers were tipped off to her presence in the city again, they got hot on her trail. Smart reporters were sent to find her at the Louise Home. But she was not there. Finally they located her at her Pennsylvania Avenue address.

When they asked whether she'd been at the Louise Home, as the *Sunday Capital* reported, she answered contemptuously that that was "quite as true as the balance of the statements in that article." She'd never been inside the Louise Home at all, though perhaps she "would not object to a residence there."

The reporters found her, "at seventy-five . . . a hale, vigorous,

well-preserved lady." Too, they saw "in her form and face . . . many of the lines and lineaments of that queenly beauty which once held captive so many men."

Where a half-century before papers only apologetically went into personalities about a woman, editors now sent reporters to get a full statement from Mrs. Eaton about her part in Jackson's administration. They were "kindly received" after they gave a "frank statement" . . . of their visit's purpose. Instantly and "cheerfully" they noted, she agreed to chat with them, though "so much had been said about her that was entirely untrue she had become afraid . . . of additional misrepresentation." When impressed by the fact that "fair and truthful treatment was intended" this time, Peggy consented to be interviewed, though she did add that she thought it useless since her life "was being written by a competent biographer, and when she should be dead, it would be given to the world." But the reporter was insistent and wanted her version while alive. His instinct was right, for the biography, prepared under the care of her New York pastor, Dr. Deems, was never published.

2.

Then, to the reporter's extreme delight, she consented to recall some of "the historical and deeply interesting memories of her active life." They revealed how active was her mind still.

She told of her birth at Washington's death.

She told of her care free girlhood, and when asked if she'd married young, she replied instantly: "Yes, and very happily, too."

Parton's exhaustive biography of Jackson was by now well-known, so the reporter knew the background of her story and set about to ask some extremely personal questions. When she came to Timberlake's end, he wished to know if the death was "natural"?

"I'm so glad you asked that question," answered Peggy, freely. "Yes, he died a natural death. A year or more previous to his death, and under great physical suffering, he made a slight and ineffectual

attempt at suicide, and that is all the foundation there is for that story."

Her subsequent marriage to Eaton was the next theme. Unhesitatingly, she commented that "it was only after General Eaton was appointed . . . Secretary of War, that I began to feel the effects of the envy of women and to suffer from wholesale slander."

As if in extenuation of "envy" she candidly offered: "I had been and was then flattered as a handsome woman. Was fond of society, gay as a lark, full of fun and nonsense . . . sometimes, maybe, a little original and lawless in my remarks, but, sir, before heaven and my God, as innocent of actual wrong to any one as an unborn babe."

The reporter swallowed her half-humorous self-portrait of 1830, and then asked a question which might have made any other woman gulp.

"Now, Mrs. Eaton, we come to the vital part of this conversation, and that a clear understanding may be had, tell us of your personal relations with General Jackson."

So a half-century had perpetuated the imputation that because she was Jackson's favorite she was intimate with him!

"It was simple enough," she said. "General Jackson and my father were friends before I was born. . . . He was a boarder at my father's house. My mother and Mrs. Jackson were greatly attracted to each other and . . . I was a favorite with them. . . . When I became the wife of General Eaton, Jackson's dearest friend, why, of course, he took greater interest in me, and for reasons and motives of the highest character, he became, in the hour of trial, such a staunch defender as only Jackson could be."

The reporter was as relentless as a prosecutor. This was history and he had to get it all. "Well, now, what constituted these reasons and motives?"

Again she had a ready answer: "You must recollect that General Jackson's wife was a Mrs. Robards, and that his enemies did not hesitate to vilify her character, previous to and after her mar-



*Photograph by Matthew Brady. Reproduced courtesy of
Mr. L. C. Handy, of Washington.*

PEGGY EATON AT 75

riage to him. It is true that she was not highly accomplished, nor fitted as an ornament to a drawing room, but she was a pure, virtuous, generous, high-souled woman, and none knew it so well as her brave husband. . . . When they began to drag the name of Eaton through the mire . . . a name especially dear to him . . . he was naturally indignant. But that was by no means all. He saw in the attempt to ruin me an adverse influence against his administration, led and secretly worked by John C. Calhoun."

"What was the nature of the slander against you?" The reporter certainly kept to his busybody business.

"To be plain," and she could be effectively plain-spoken, "that I was *enceinte* after Timberlake had been gone a year at sea, and by General Eaton. A more monstrous lie was never told."

"Was there anything to base it on?" the reporter tirelessly persisted.

"Nothing, absolutely nothing," she avowed, and then told of her ride with Eaton and her mother, when they were all thrown, and the doctor called. "When he came, father and mother were present in my chamber. It is alleged that I said 'Doctor, if you had come sooner you might have seen a little John Henry Eaton,' but I never made any such remark."

"Who started that slander?" The reporter wished details.

"For the present, I will omit references to the ladies of the Cabinet. . . . There was one Rev. J. N. Campbell here who was a pastor of a Presbyterian church, who intermeddled in the affair, joined the gossip against me and did all he could to blast my reputation. He supposed that General Jackson would attend his church and that he could have influence over him. He told the Reverend E. S. Ely, of Philadelphia, a budget of lies about me, and induced him to communicate the same to General Jackson in a letter. That is the same Reverend Ely whose daughter is now connected with . . . the robbery of diamonds of the Grand Duke of Russia, and who found a **BABY IN A BASKET** on his doorstep one morning with a note asking him, as its father, to take care of it."

Suppressing a smile, the reporter admitted that "Parton in his life of Jackson, refers to Ely's letter."

That was news to Peggy. "Indeed! What does he say?"

"Why, he says that Ely wrote Jackson that you instructed your servants to call your children Eaton, not Timberlake."

"Good Heavens!" cried an astonished Peg, for Eaton and Jackson had kept the worst contents from her. "I never heard of that before. So help me God, I never did anything of the kind. It is a base, unmitigated lie; what else did the wretch say?"

"For one thing," the reporter reluctantly admitted, "he said you and General Eaton traveled together and registered at hotels as man and wife before you were married to him."

"This is too much, sir. Put that down as a lie. It was the first time I ever heard of having traveled anywhere previous to marriage with General Eaton, more than once, and that was to New York and Mr. Timberlake and my father were with us."

By now, she was thoroughly roused. At his urging that she tell what she did when she learned of Ely's communication, she plunged into a rapid-fire sketch of pastoral denunciations. When she got through, it looked like eternal damnation for them. Left and right, she lashed into Cabinet ladies, labeling them "an inferior lot." When she had excited her auditor sufficiently, he suggested that she had also been accused of making most of Jackson's appointments. She replied, "Yes, they said that," but she denied having been instrumental but in two needy, deserving cases.

And then, "with evident pain," she described the débâcle of her last marriage. She confirmed what the *Capital* had said about Buchignani. She, too, had "heard that he was dead, and the last seen of Emily she was traveling west with two children."

Her interviewer, with historical prerogative, had pumped her about Administration affairs, but he felt editors or no editors, that "this part of her history had neither public interest nor importance," so he forebore further questioning.

The editor considered that he had a *coup*. With a flourish, he

wrote a prefatory note to the article to inform the generation which knew of Jackson only as a past president of Peggy's identity. "In 1829," it began, "one of the most remarkable women America ever produced, came prominently into view before the public: Mrs. General John H. Eaton. Yesterday it was the privilege of a representative of the *National Republican* to have an hour or two's conversation with her and to obtain her consent to make the conversation public. All the following statements of facts concerning her are by her authority, and they cover incidents in her wonderful history from earliest infancy to the present time, and constitute a chapter thrilling as the romantic imagination of the great masters of fiction. While it confirms some of the items familiar to the general reader touching her life, it explodes many a false idea and gives a clear and true insight into the foundation and history of the scandalous charges which made her name famous, which led to a dissolution of a Cabinet, which killed the higher aspirations of Calhoun for political preferment, which made Van Buren President of the United States, and which illustrated the devotion of Old Hickory to an injured woman."

The headlines read: "WHO IS THIS WONDERFUL WOMAN? Her own Story." The edition was a sell-out. Once again, everyone was talking of Peggy Eaton, and all noticed the "personal description of this wonderful woman" at the end of the article. Washington was full of distinguished and lovely women, but the paper conceded that Peggy was far and away more distinctively beautiful and distinguished than contemporaries.

The reporter could hardly contain himself: "Today . . . she is still a beautiful woman, an old-time lady, one of the ancient régime, who looks as if she had just stepped out of a revolutionary frame. . . . When all excited, her beautiful, bright, fiery eyes gleam and sparkle with original fire. Her white, rosy, though furrowed face lights up with a warm, passionate glow, and her whole being is instinct with that magnetism which once the greatest dignitaries of the Government obeyed. Her character is best summed up in the

words: pluck, game, hauteur, care for No. 1., quality, blood, and if we were unfortunate enough to be a woman, we would hesitate, even now, about a collision with her."

Ah, that was tribute Peggy would love. But he then lapsed into sentimentality.

"And yet, she is a white-haired old lady. Her gray curls twine about her noble forehead like 'silver seething waters.' They lap and kiss furrows and channels, hallowed by a long and memorable life. She is a woman, in her later life, of 'gloomy yesterdays and dim tomorrows' but here and there, dying sunbeams, playing about her classical features, light up with beauty a splendid soul prepared to meet its God. It is no wonder that her name has occupied so much space and that she has been the subject of fiercest controversy."

3.

Journalists, attracted by Peggy's vivid personality communicated in this article, came to chat with her. Out-of-town papers clamored for personal interviews. Overhead wires, instead of underground ones, now took her story around the nation again. A Tennessee journalist traveling through the Capital sent back a story to Franklin, Eaton's old home town. He was astonished by her minute memory of persons she'd met there a half century before and her rollicking mimicry of them.

Perhaps hoping to prompt a blush, he asked her what she thought of Andrew Jackson as a man. He really was getting personal. With divine disdain, she looked her questioner up and down, as if to measure his strength to withstand the shock of her reply.

"Andrew Jackson as a man?" she temporized. "He *wasn't* a man; he was a . . . God!"

The reporter was beaten. He bent his head while hers lifted in arrogance. Wouldn't Andrew have humbly admired her Olympian memory of him? Eaton, too, would have been proud of the answer.

Similar anecdotes startled the contemporary political boys. What

grit! By God, the old girl had guts! She still dared to say what she thought, succinctly, scathingly.

The new devotion of the newer generation of journalists with their keen interest in her influence at the "flush of beauty," and the heyday of her career, jacked up her vanity. One boy had deserted her for a far younger woman, but here were young men making the most of their hours with her. This was "grateful incense to the woman to whom flattery and conquest had been the breath of life."

One witty fellow who attracted her because he was as much a *bon vivant* as her father had been, observed that "she now wore her serge with the same nameless air as she'd once worn her silk." She was "alert," and keen. Men, knowing of the trickery which deprived her of her proper setting for a *grande dame finale*, marvelled at her resilience.

With resolute energy, she relegated the past to the past, and with zest plunged into the life about her. The past was a vivid memory, the present a still more vivid reality. Luxury, bald and unabashed, stalked Washington's broad staircases, and ladies of the Cabinet who could oftentimes ill-afford it, lived beyond their means. In Peggy's day, the government received severe criticism for expenditures for furnishing the White House, but now government officials ran amuck on railroad and land grant graft. The beautiful wife of Secretary of War Belknap was now blamed for accepting graft from an appointee. A mine-scandal, involving a former Ambassador to Great Britain, and unsavory contracts were revealed and reviled. Grant's trust in friends gave rein to flagrant governmental debauchery.

President Jackson had stood by her as a moral man for a moral cause, but President Grant now cloaked deficiencies in his administration's personnel for immoral governmental usage, as nauseating as it was nefarious. The Capital's simplicity had changed to complexity. The colonial states of her girlhood had grown to a nation which stretched from Atlantic to Pacific. Instead of solitary rider or a single stage, there were transcontinental railroads; instead of

messages sent through slow-stage mails, there were telegraph lines, and linking an old world and a new one was the Atlantic Cable, laid not long ago.

The world had changed, but not Peggy. The political buccaneering she saw as somewhat necessary to such startling growth. Jackson was long since gone; Calhoun's estate was up for sheriff sale; Van Buren, jolly to the end, lay buried with his Dutch ancestors, yet she lived on, destined alone of them all to see a ripening of the rights of the common man they'd fought for, each in his own way.

The political writers told her of talk of civil service reforms, war on trusts and monopolies, and Peggy nodded approval. The young blood which sat at Peggy's feet in those years was an astute generation. And yet it drew vitality for liberal political thought from an active grand old lady whose mere presence seemed validity for some of their sentiments. It is not perhaps far from the mark to say they felt nourished by the national events she had lived through, in her person embodying a brave transition from colonial to more cosmopolitan life. When she repeated things her father told her as a girl of his friend, Washington, and what she herself observed as a woman about Andrew Jackson, they had first-hand contact with careers crystallized in their country's history. With each anecdote of her girlhood in a village-like Capital, they imbibed succulent local color filtered through a vivid mind.

Journalists were not the only ones who sat listening to her for hours. When weary of the environs of the Capitol, and the locale of lawmakers, she used to go out to Oak Hill Cemetery again. The caretaker, Frank Summerville, found her fascinating, and the stories she told full of flavor. They were never unkind, but they never missed the point for want of blunt speech. Rapt, he used to sit for hours under the waving green and unmoving white of the cemetery setting listening to Peggy Eaton. She was "not more garrulous than her years" which was fast piling toward eighty.

As remarkably preserved as her mother had been, she carried

over from youth, in addition, a matchless animation which gave her real beauty still. When men, young men at that, went sentimental about the glowing eyes of a mere girl of seventy-odd, admired the expressiveness of her face, furrowed about still-perfect features, it seemed indeed as though the gray head was just "a jest of time."

With the same sustained brilliance, she went to Presidential receptions and left callers gravely pondering the strength of the ancient régime, or talked for hours on end with an unending allure to so unimportant a person as a cemetery-keeper.

And the *gamine* in her impelled her to tell tales that were a shade self-deprecatory. Her faculty for making the dead take on life-like nearness to her hearers extended to her own remote past, which she illumined with the same imaginative ardor.

Social engagements faded into nothingness, rituals of democratic fellowship receded, when once she drew back the magic curtains of her middle years. Jacksonian democracy was now a milestone which its last participant could still endow with immediacy.

In herself, they saw, she was authentically American, though derided by the representative America of her time. Perhaps her most American quality was demonstrated when her granddaughter, Blanche Marie Sampayo, "Ginger's" daughter, married Baron Nathaniel Meyer Rothschild, a member of the famous banking family who now took to art, music and literature in Paris. Peggy considered it no great feat, while all society was stimulated. She had more respect for her hard-working grandson who supported her, and didn't hesitate to say as much. She, an Irish-innkeeper's daughter, had dared to be her own bold, original self because it was her nature, in a time when women in coastal cities were timid and conventional. Had she been born outside the Capital, she might have been a hardy pioneer and created a home in the wilderness. But she probably would have driven her way there eventually with a law-maker husband.

Washington gave her second-wind, or was it fourth? Those who knew her well then often remarked that it was necessary to her

life-cycle that she spend her last days in the Capital where she'd begun them. To her end, strollers stared at the commanding figure of a young-old woman and were haunted by the clarity of a full-stare, penetrating and personal.

An enterprising Washington photographer, Matthew Brady, invited her to his studio for a sitting. She came carrying a small bag in which were the clothes in which she wished to be snapped. The costume was a black dress with white lace collar. About the latter she was finicky, wanting it to lay just so against her throat.

Posed before the camera, her curiosity was prodigious. Could that black box really create her image? Whether the better to acquaint the photographer with her personality, or whether natural inquisitiveness, she talked incessantly. But what she said had "point." And she kept her bright blue eyes glued on her listener. With this double hold on her auditor's attention, the photographer confesses that "she played with you like a cat does with a bird." She knew her powers and she still exercised them.

When the actual snapping had to be done, the operator warned her that she would have to keep absolutely quiet for eight seconds, for it was an old style camera. Composing herself, and pressing her lips tight, she made a valiant effort to comply. The result is the first and last photograph ever made of her. When it was over, she jumped up hastily and said she had to be off. Independent, resourceful, still brimful of fire and feeling, she bid them good-bye.

The photographer raised both hands high after she left and solemnly said to his apprentice: "Whatever you do, don't lose that negative. We'll never get her again, and she's history!" Mr. Levin Corbin Handy, that apprentice, has photographed thousands of world celebrities. No woman, he says, ever looked as alert as Peggy Eaton. Though she was called vain from childhood, and had no lack of self-love, she never came back to be photographed a second time.

When she was seventy-nine, she moved from Pennsylvania Avenue to Ninth Street, N. W. It was only seldom that she went to

church now. Her mother had long ago prepared her to meet her God. While ever in readiness, she was never quite ready to give up the ghost. Like her father, she lived her life to its hilt and was ready to go at any moment, yet regretted the going.

On Decoration Day 1879 she went out to Oak Hill cemetery to pay respects to her dead. Some new monuments having been erected, she was confused and could not find her way.

"O, have I lost my graves?" she exclaimed, "how I am failing! It was never so before that I could not find my dead."

"She put the flowers on the graves, touching them with tender and tremulous hands, and going back again, after she had turned to go, to lay more roses down close and heavy over the grave of her . . . daughter, with such caressing touches as one would shield another from the cold. She talked of her dead, calling them by name—talking to them as though they could indeed hear her."

"It is the last time. I shall never come here again till I come to stay," she said. "It is a beautiful place to rest in at last."

Shortly thereafter she fell ill of dropsy. "The complications of disorders from which she suffered made it impossible for her to sleep except in a sitting position." Thus erect and energetic still, she clung to life "with the strong tenacity of an organization endowed with intense vitality." Like a spectral presence, she sat in bed remarking the stupendous, almost Frankenstein growth of America, with its magnetic appeal to immigrants the world over.

She had been called "The American Pompadour," yet she had only done what any American woman could have accomplished. That she had done it had been her destiny. America's future fascinated her. It was "a beautiful world." One being she brought into the world deliberately stretched her tentacles across the sea to mingle with an old aristocracy, while the other furnished a sober, industrious American citizen and a child with such maddening fire in her veins that she deliberately took to herself the immigrant identification of her grandmother's Italian husband. One granddaughter lived in fabulous luxury in a Viennese castle filled with

art treasures ordered by the original Pompadour; the other roved the new world with the illegitimate children of a reckless fellow who found favor in her eyes. Their twin destinies were the two most powerful parts of Peggy's nature, projected to her progeny.

One day the doctor ordered her to lie down. She knew it was the end. Struggle was useless. So she seemed tranquil. As she lay swollen in size by her illness, bloating the beautiful form which to the end had been elastic and firm, she awaited death calmly. Her favorite journalist came in and saw that her face "retained its spirited and clear-cut outline." He reflected that her fame came from "sheer force of native wit and will."

It was a gray November day, such as that on which she lost Eaton. Suddenly the sun shone, tinting all with radiance. Peggy smiled as its rays penetrated the sick room, saying that she would like to go out in the sun once more. Someone consoled her that she would be taken out the next day.

"No, not tomorrow," she replied with resignation. "Tomorrow I shall be here only a little while."

During the night, she tossed restlessly, unable to sleep because of her supine position.

"The night is so long," she murmured. "If morning would only come." Morning came at last, and with light her courage to fight. "Up to ten minutes within her death, she retained full consciousness, neither sight nor sound impaired, and she would respond to the question, 'Do you know me?' with a slight impatience in the affirmative, as though wondering why her recognition should be questioned."

When the minister came, she repeated in a "clear, firm voice" the hymn "*I Will Not Live Alway*."

And yet, that day, November 9, 1879, at noon, when the blazing sun was in its full glory, high in the heaven, she went forever saying: "I am not afraid to die, but this is such a beautiful world to leave."

EPILOGUE: UNANCHORED

EPILOGUE

EVEN her funeral was political. Official Washington ceased work to follow the "game warrior" to her grave. The Chief of Police himself was her chief pallbearer, and the President and Mrs. Hayes sent the largest wreath of white roses. Peggy would have preferred them red, blood red, intense like herself. Until sunset, crowds streamed steadily past the new-made mound at the cemetery. Her writing friends observed that the funeral was "largely attended," subsequently telegraphing it throughout the country. Appropriately enough, when they buried her, the National Theatre had billed Boucicault's "Contempt of Court."

Again, she got headlines in the papers. How she would have smiled at "One-Time Society Queen!" And if any power could have helped her arise, she certainly would have complained laconically of all the errors contained in her full-column obituary which every important paper printed. The more important the paper, the more it philosophized. She would have been a shade amused by Greeley's verdict that "she created a noise quite out of proportion to her importance," and perhaps a shade complimented by the *Philadelphia Press'* observation that her life-story shows that our history is not quite so pure as our teachers would have us believe. She would have been flippant when the *New York Times* ponderously took stock of her aristocratic connections abroad and opined that "Peg O'Neale, as she was generally called in the days of the Washington tavern, could never have hoped, in her most sanguine mood, while serving out drinks to politicians, to have such distinguished posterity . . . any more than she could have dreamed of being, successively, young wife of the Secretary of War and octogenarian wife of a youthful

Italian dancing master." Perhaps an appreciative flicker would have crossed her face when her favorite journalist wrote that she was "one of those unclassified women who cannot be included in any known category. She belonged to the women of restless heart whose lives are always stormy, sometimes great, and rarely happy."

Another of her editorial friends in Washington read all the slush belatedly written about her "romantic and dramatic life" and metaphorically spat, just as she might have done. Her memory didn't need such slobber, he wrote, for "her reputation is ironclad."

And yet, the most famous woman political America ever knew, whose name caused notoriety at every step throughout a long life, a Pompadour celebrated in story but not in stone, she lies next to Eaton at Oak Hill in an unmarked grave.

It is the living, certainly, who decreed that oblivion's moss should creep about her tomb. For when her closest American descendant was located, his family could not conjecture through whose agency the relationship was revealed but thought it "certainly through no friend of his."

Of all the insults to Peggy's ebullient spirit, of all the conspiracies to snub her so that she would keep to her station, instead of rising as yeast to surrounding leaven, this repudiation would have been hardest to bear.

Peggy Eaton, the irreverent wit, the only woman whose irreconcilable will was indissolubly imposed on American government, and whose name can never be disassociated from Jacksonian Democracy, never knew the exact day of her birth, nor does posterity know positively where she lies, quiet at last, disowned by her relatives in death as by her enemies in life.

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